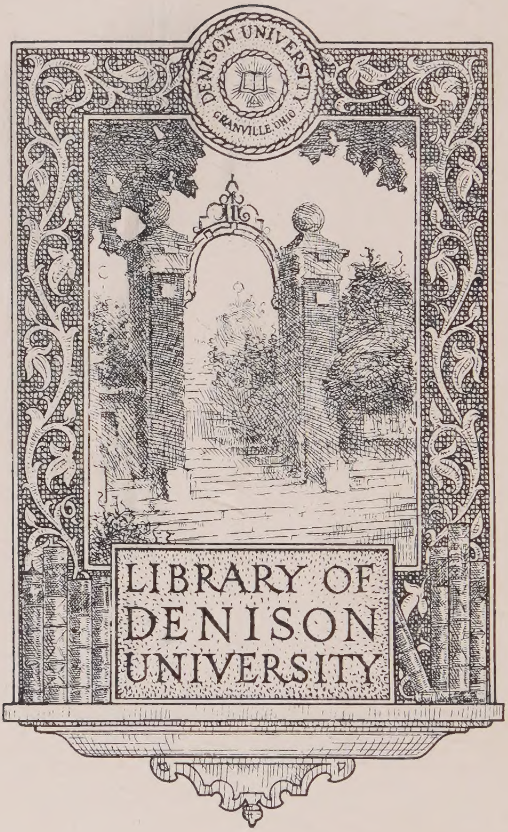

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THE MODERN ITALIAN NOVEL

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The
MODERN ITALIAN NOVEL

BY
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To the little family that
consoles me for the long
separation from my Mother

PREFACE

THE present book grew out of lectures delivered at the Graduate School of the University of Pennsylvania. The ideas therein expressed evolved from intercourse with my pupils, and I owe it to them if these ideas have reached the point of clearness necessary to one who sets out to put them on paper.

I was helped in this process of clarification by my colleagues and friends with whom I discussed the problems that arose while I was working on the book. I especially appreciate the kindness of Dr. Edgar A. Singer, Jr., Dr. William E. Lingelbach, Dr. Walton B. McDaniel, Dr. Robert B. Burke and Mr. Roy Thomas, who gave me their reactions to certain chapters of the book, offering helpful suggestions. I am indebted more than words can express to Dr. Singer. The searching power of his great mind is equalled only by the warmth of his heart. Among my friends I wish particularly to mention Mrs. Horace T. Fleisher and Mrs. George Hadzsits, who encouraged me and suggested better expressions and more idiomatic phrases.

I submitted the manuscript to Dr. Felix Schelling, who gave me the benefit of his criticism, in the light of which I revised the first part of the work.

Above all, am I indebted to Dr. J. P. W. Crawford, head of the Romanic Department, who in his unfailing kindness went over the entire manuscript, improving it by his suggestions and corrections.

Dr. Paul H. Musser, Dean of the College, helped me in arranging more consistently the different parts of the book, and allowed me to discuss with him problems that I met in revising it. I consulted Dr. Albert C. Baugh about the extent and arrangement of the bibliography. The entire manuscript was revised very kindly and diligently by Dr. Edward H. Heffner and his wife, who looked after the uniformity in spelling and punctuation, and improved many passages that were not very clear.

I owe a special gratitude to my wife, who helped and encouraged me during the months of work devoted to writing this book.

The title, *The Modern Italian Novel*, refers both to the nineteenth century novel and to the contemporary novel. It will be readily seen that the development of the nineteenth century novel is merely outlined, since it is meant to serve only as a background for the contemporary novel that has received a detailed treatment.

It has been my purpose to introduce to the American public the truly significant part of modern and contemporary Italian fiction. If I have succeeded, be it in a small degree, I am happy to have rendered such a service to the land of my adoption.

DOMENICO VITTORINI

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INTRODUCTION

THE CYCLES OF THE MODERN NOVEL

IN a study of contemporary art, it may be well to point out the moment in which a certain art-mode takes the place of another, and the characteristics and contrasts which differentiate the new from the old.

It is generally conceded that modern Italian fiction began with the publication of Alessandro Manzoni's novel *I Promessi Sposi* ("The Betrothed") in 1827. From that time the fundamental traits that Manzoni gave to his fiction have never lost their identity nor have they ceased to dominate the story-teller's art. The innovations introduced by Manzoni changed both the method of producing and the type of product of Italian fiction, and for this reason his novel is of paramount importance in the history of Italian letters.

Italian literature before Manzoni was characterized by conflicting and almost antithetical tendencies. What we may term "court literature" aimed at a sort of transcendentalism expressed in gods, traditional heroes, shepherds, and fairylands. The "people's literature," on the other hand, clung to a brutal realism and to the representation of the actual world in all its ugliness and commonplace aspects. In the very days of Dante, while he soared to the lofty regions of imagination, writers like Cecco d'Ascoli and Cecco Angiolieri scoffed at his idealism and painted life realistically. While Petrarch longed for the grandeur of ancient Rome, Boccaccio in his *Decameron* studied and ridiculed the Florentine bourgeoisie. In the sixteenth century, side by side with the fantastic art of Ariosto and with the stately epic poetry of Tasso, we find the realism of the *Mandragola* by Machiavelli. While Trissino and Giraldi produced their pseudo-classic tragedies, the people created the grotesque world of the *Commedia dell'arte.*

Realism, however, as exemplified in the works of Cecco Angiolieri and of Machiavelli, was banished from the citadel of true art. The realistic art-mode, though scattered over the whole history of art, had throughout that history been allowed but scant place in the midst of very different modes whose power and influence had eclipsed the feeble efforts of realism. Dante looked disdainfully at the realism of Cielo d'Alcamo and of Guittone, and Petrarch confessed to his friend Boccaccio of not having read the latter's *Decameron* because it was "written for the people and in prose." [1]

It was due to Manzoni that this unvalued and undignified art began to take on strength, and from 1827 on attained so much vitality as to drive other and older forms from the field of fiction. Although realism as a recognized tendency appeared in the eighteenth century and in the early part of the nineteenth, one might count as its distant forerunners the naturalistic philosophers of the sixteenth century from Pomponazzi to Bruno. In the following century, a great individualist, Alessandro Tassoni, in his *Pensieri* ("Thoughts") fought a gallant battle against imitation and stressed the power of realism in art. The translation of his *Pensieri*, made by the Abbé Boisrobert, started the "*Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes.*" [2] During this celebrated dispute France took the lead in moulding the idea of modernity based on realism. The progressive ideas that appeared then returned to Italy in the early eighteenth century enriched with the philosophical arguments of Descartes and Malebranche, and led to the attacks against the traditional literature on the ground that "actual life" destroyed its aesthetic canons and its mythological fables. The two banners around which furious battles were fought were mythology and actual life. If we call modernity the implicit and exalted faith in the tangible universe and the belief in its aesthetic possibilities, assigning to art the function of expressing new spiritual values, Manzoni's age constituted the first stage of modern literature, and the historical novel marked the dawn of the modern novel.

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[1] *Seniles*, XVII, 3.

[2] Rigault, H. *Histoire de la querelle des anciens et des modernes*, 1859.

In 1816, there appeared one of the most significant documents of realism that was ever written. It was the *Lettera di Grisostomo* ("Grisostomo's Letter") by Giovanni Berchet. In it he defended modern poetry against the imitation of the poetry of the past and added: "Be contemporary to your own times and not to the dead centuries. Free yourselves from the mist which envelopes your writings, from old liturgies and from old fables. Search into the soul of your own people, give to it thought and not empty words."[3] He wanted art to study Nature since "poetry is the expression of living Nature and it must be living as the object that it expresses, as the thought which animates it."[4]

Deeper and clearer is the theory of realism in Manzoni, who rejected the three dramatic unities because actual life, "experience" as he terms it, rejected and destroyed them. "In the historical system," he states, "the poet takes long intervals of time and space from the action [that he relates] such as they are offered to him by *reality*."[5] He wishes art to be based on *truth*. "The naturalness of and interest in dramatic characters derive from truth, and this truth is the very basis of the historical system."[6]

Long before he wrote his novel, the idea that art has "to conform to reality" had attracted his attention, and this belief is the nucleus of his original letter to M. Chauvet

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[3] *Lettera*, p. 116.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[5] *Opere*, Vol. II, p. 318.

[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 323.

(1821), in which he upholds realism in defiance of the rules of the pedagogues. Following his creative instinct, Manzoni enriched fiction with material derived from his study of human life. One cannot fail to notice that the artist, from Manzoni on, has developed in the direction of the experimenter. In unprecedented and ever-increasing measure, the story-teller of these last years has added to his knowledge of facts by fresh observation before trusting himself to work the material of his experience into that recognized art-form called fiction.

This new art method turned out a different fashion of work. If, from Manzoni down, the artist aimed at observing the world around him, whether for purposes of science or of art, he was forced to observe a great "diversity of creatures," and the closer the observation, the greater the variety uncovered. Since he aimed at modeling the creatures of his fiction as closely as may be on the figures actually studied in the world, he could not attain his aim by the means of a generic description, content to present the type of the "miser," "lover," "hypocrite," "coward." In fact, this new method destroyed the "type" which had weighed heavily on the courtly portion of Italian literature.

The presence of the "type" had destroyed, or rather covered, the minute details, the small differences, and what was characteristic in each individual. A type was, in fact, presented through universal attributes only, and in a drama of types only such things as were supposed to happen "always or for the most part" were allowed to befall the members of the class.

Manzoni, later supported by Verga and Pirandello, knew the importance of small differences and created an art presenting the drama of a humanity which is as living as it is different. Under the details and the small differences, he discovered a more important factor: character, which in modern fiction replaced the *deus ex machina* of old.

But an experienced fiction must be also as full of surprise as it is "real," deriving the elements of surprise from the life that it is willing to portray. Hence, the new artist produced a fiction which was so full of action as to give the impression that the stir of real life had been brought into it. The pseudo-classicists had resorted in fact to "unity of action" in order to lessen, through selection, the violence of life. The new realists were strong enough to accept life in all its power, hence their different art.

Thus far we have ascertained that there was a new art-mode in Italian literature which appeared a little over a hundred years ago. To say that this art-mode dominates a given stretch of years does not mean that its fashion suffered no variation during that time. This very obvious statement permits us to recognize that within this long period of realism there lie shorter periods in which three generations, represented by Manzoni, Verga, and Pirandello, have differently expressed their sense of the real.

Their realism portrays three distinct aspects which life assumed with each of them in turn. Life is an abstract entity which must take a concrete form to realize itself and to become dynamic in human history. Life consequently is identified in different times with the different directions that it follows and with the various aspects that it assumes. Each new aspect gives rise to a cycle in which the new mode of life looms, grows, attains its climax, then dims and dies out to be followed by another.

The center of the first cycle was the idea of historicity. Manzoni expressed his desire for historical documentation in the form of historical novel or romance. For this reason classifying historians have usually referred to this period of realism as the "romantic" or the "historical." This method and tendency led to the moulding of a formula: reality in history. The artist tried to awaken a sense of life in man as the latter appeared in history. The life that Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, and Alessandro Manzoni infused into their characters throbbed in the distances of the past.

Such a cycle spanned the first half of the nineteenth century with the Romantic movement and created the historical novel and the masterpiece of the age, *I Promessi Sposi.*

But documentation respecting events of the past is inherently less thorough and exhaustive than observation of matters current and near-lying. It is almost inevitable that a realistic method beginning with mere historical documents must sometime in the course of its development cease to be historical in its interest and turn its attention to the "actual"; that is to say, to the world susceptible of present observation. In Italian fiction, such a turning of the artist's observation from the past to the present is readily to be noticed and is generally accounted to have taken place about the year 1850. A new cycle was thus opened which unfolded in the second half of the nineteenth century. The romantic formula, "reality in history," was then replaced with that of "reality in sensation." Following this formula, the naturalistic novel marked a step nearer to actual life than the historical novel, since it studied man in the new social conditions and analyzed the new problems of the time. It culminated in Giovanni Verga's novel, *I Malavoglia* ("The Malavoglias").

The contrast between "study of documents" and "observation of nature" is perhaps common enough to explain why in the development of Italian realism the period following on its first, "historical," phase should have come to be called a period of "naturalistic" fiction.

It will readily be imagined that the same generating motives which urged realism on from its "historical" to its "naturalistic" stage are of a nature to urge it beyond naturalism. Just as historical documentation is of easier acquisition than is a descriptive knowledge of present observable nature, so the account of this visible human nature is easier which is content to describe humanity's more observable gestures and to interpret these in terms of its more elementary and wider-spread thoughts and emotions. Sheer difficulty of the task must necessarily have delayed any objective and experimental account of the part played in the drama of life by man's more hidden and rarer moods of reflection. Yet he would be a poor student of humanity who was unaware of the modifying influence that reflection exerts on the instinctive impulse to act. And so in the development of realistic fiction we should expect a moment to arrive at which its experimenting method should, for dramatic purpose, make use of materials gathered from observation of the intellectual and reflective moments of human existence. Such a development does actually begin, and may be said to appear first in the work of Luigi Pirandello about the year 1900. By critics who have already recognized this third and last variation of the realistic method in art it has been called "idealistic" or "reflective" realism, to distinguish it from the "historical" and "naturalistic" phases which preceded it. We shall refer to this third, last, and still dominant strain of Italian fiction as "neo-idealistic." The period referred to as "contemporary" is now identified with the span of some thirty years (1900 to date) dominated by the "reflective realism" of our day. This new tendency has shifted reality from sensation to the intellect. It analyzes the tragedies, agonies, and the triumph of man in the pursuit of this intangible and elusive entity, the idea, thus creating another formula: reality in the idea. It has given life to the introspective work of Luigi Pirandello, Alfredo Panzini, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Federico Tozzi. Their art is intellectual, but it is deeply human, in that it is fashioned out of man's tormented attitude towards the perplexing problems of contemporary life.

I

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

ALESSANDRO MANZONI (MILAN, 1785–1873) AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

THE great figure of Alessandro Manzoni occupies the first half of the nineteenth century and links the days of Italy's struggle for a political unity to Italy of today that has reclaimed him as a master and a leader.

The two epochs, Romanticism and Neo-Idealism, bear a marked resemblance to each other, for both aspire to a spiritual and dynamic conception of life.

Fiction is the expression of a practical and active stage of life, just as lyric poetry points at thoughtful passiveness and introspection. In the days of primitive Greece, the dynamic mood of the race expressed itself through the epic of Homer, who sang the exploits of the early warriors, just as in the Middle Ages, in days of spiritual vitality, it gave life to Dante's journey on his quest of human perfection. The latter is no longer the adventurous journey of Ulysses through the unfurrowed waters of the Mediterranean, but is inspired by an energetic activity.

Italy, having assumed a passive and contemplative mood during the Renaissance, developed lyric poetry and in the bulky production of almost four centuries we find in the field of narrative literature only the rudimentary fiction of Boccaccio and that of the short-story writers of the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, when Italy lay prostrate in the very depths of decadence, the lyricism of the poet Giambattista Marino crowded out every vestige of narrative literature.

Fiction does not reappear until the end of the eighteenth century, when Italian life, through the treaties of Utrecht (1713) and of Rastadt (1714), and later with the peace of Vienna (1736) and Aquisgrana (1748), acquired again a national character, and entered a new phase of activity. The eighteenth century was tormented by the desire of the concrete and the finite, and through this desire it was led face to face with a life as primitive as that of Robinson Crusoe, the symbol of a generation of men who began to build civilization anew. Every form of life was in fact reduced to a primitive naked state. Dogmatic religion became a primitive theism; the elaborate conception of state, as Louis XIV had realised it, was denied and destroyed, and society was plunged into chaos. The stilted and abstract literature of the times was replaced by one that resumed the treatment of themes derived from the observation of everyday life as is evinced by Goldoni in Italy, Beaumarchais in France, and Fielding in England.

The problem of the age centered upon giving a sense of measure and harmony to these turbulent but gigantic energies which opened a new horizon to the political and social life of the world. The stormy waves of the Revolution reached a level in the early nineteenth century, when, through the Treaty of Vienna, peace was restored in Europe, when theism was replaced by a return to Christianity, and when the eighteenth century realism made place for the lofty themes of the Romantic school.

It is at this point that we meet Alessandro Manzoni, who reflected in his temperament and his art the eurhythmic characteristics of the short lull that intervened between the French Revolution and the wars for Italian independence. At a time when writers found themselves perplexed between a crude portrayal of actual reality and an aimless flight through the realm of unbridled fantasy, he gave to realism an ideal content and he lent a sense of measure and concreteness to the Romantic aspiration towards the indefinable and fantastic. We witness in him the blending of the actual and of the ideal elements of life into a perfect form of art. Realism, applied to great minds, assumes a different meaning from the usually accepted one of photographing actual life. Great men make the actual *real* in the domain of the spirit by destroying the contradictions which torment their generation. With them actual life is lifted on to a higher plane, where human acts acquire ideal values.

Manzoni stood midway between the tumult of life and the stately composure of thought. He was human enough, curious enough, endowed with enough sense of humor to love and to study men. He was indifferent and selfish enough, he had enough in him of the pure philosopher not to mingle too closely with them. He did not live in utter solitude like Giacomo Leopardi, one of his great contemporaries, yet he did not come so close to the men of his generation and to the life of his times as to see their prosaic sides. He spent most of his time in his villa at Brusuglio near Milan enjoying nature and surrounded by genial guests who admired his urbane and humorous conversation. By his contemporaries he was criticized for not having taken a more direct and active part in the political question, yet no one can doubt his patriotism. As Classicists and Romanticists fought, he stood aside not as a dignified and stately judge who watches a conflict but with the indifference of one who is convinced of the futility of disputes.

The first impression that one receives from studying Manzoni's personality is that of an Olympian calm. Yet, a close analysis discovers that his calm was a slow conquest and that under it there struggled his lucid and logical intellect held in subjection by his deep religious belief. Manzoni's religious feelings are tinged with the humanitarian tendency of the French Revolution. They have passed through its fire and they have been renewed. Religion is not with him a cold body of doctrine; it is a guide to right thinking and living, and is based on an ethical conception of life, as is evidenced by his "*Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica*" ("Remarks on Catholic Ethics"), 1819.

Few men have been more bitterly tested than Manzoni, who saw his eight children fade away and die, lost his first and his second wife, and yet was granted a long life to meditate on the fleeting character of things human. His religion was determined by the need of a prop, by a desire of delimitation, or order, to put an end to intellectual wavering and to the torment of doubt. In the ode on Napoleon's death he terminated all discussion about the greatness or baseness of the Emperor by imagining him under the wings of God's pity. "Was it true glory [that of Napoleon]? To posterity belongs the difficult answer. We bend our heads before our creator, who left in him a vast imprint of His creative spirit."[1]

Beneath the idealism of Manzoni there is an undertone of vague pessimism very similar to that of the churches which, in their pursuit of the transcendental, look disinterestedly at the gifts of the earth. Manzoni forces himself to accept stern morality, because he seeks harmony in life and he knows that only through it can such a goal be obtained. For this reason he forces his passions to submit to morality and contemplates them only when they have lost the violence of instinct. This is Manzoni's solution of the old dualism between body and spirit, and it should put an end to the futile recrimination of the critics about the lack of passion in his works.

Manzoni's intercourse and intellectual contacts with France help us to understand how complex and even contradictory his personality was. When he came in touch with the rationalistic thought of the French Encyclopaedia he lost his faith. From 1805 to 1810 he lived in Paris, where he joined in the brilliant conversations and discussions at the villa of the widow of Condorcet, and in

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[1] *Cinque Maggio*, l. 26–31.

Auteil, where he frequented the salon of Mme. Cabanis, wife of a physician and materialistic philosopher. The eighteenth century French spirit, subtle, paradoxical, logical to the last consequence, lucid, and penetrating, had its effect on the young Manzoni. He plunged into a materialistic philosophy of the universe, and he seems a forerunner of Naturalism in his *Trionfo della libertà* ("Triumph of Liberty"), 1801. He declares himself against every sort of repression, and, protesting against the celibacy of priests, he writes, "Pious suicide; he [the priest] consecrates himself to hard chastity, suffocating the desires and voices of nature." His return to Catholicism wiped out this faith in instinct and gave a sense of calm to his outlook on life, as evidenced by his *Inni sacri* ("Sacred Hymns"), 1812–1822.

Manzoni passed from lyric poetry to drama and from drama to the novel, a change determined by the fact that his sense of reality grew less lyrical as it became enriched with his experience. In 1820 and in 1821 he published his tragedies, *Il conte di Carmagnola* and *Adelchi* ("The Count of Carmagnola" and "Adelchi"). Later, when his experience of life and his creative instinct became closer and deeper, he relinquished the theatre for fiction and, in 1827, published his novel, *I Promessi Sposi* ("The Betrothed").

Manzoni's tragedies, like most of the Renaissance drama, were meant to be read rather than acted. Tragedy was conceived as dwelling in a different region from comedy; the former dealt with lofty themes and characters while the latter portrayed the average individual and commonplace events. The lofty and abstract character of tragedy was determined by the fact that it was based on the imitation of Greek and Latin authors, a circumstance that prevented its direct contact with and study of life. This point was of paramount importance in the disputes between the Classicists and the Romanticists, and it was on this ground that Manzoni parted company with the Classicists and joined the ranks of the Romanticists, although with reservations. In 1820 he still called himself "a good and loyal partisan of classicism," but a new problem was looming before him, that of the mixture of comic and tragic in the drama. The Classicists rejected the comic as this element clashed with their desire for an art inspired by life, existing in concepts and formulas, rather than by life throbbing with all the pathos of what is both tragic and grotesque. In 1823 Manzoni was working on a new tragedy, *Spartaco;* he left it unfinished and began to work on his novel.

Walter Scott had made the historical novel famous and popular in Europe. In Italy as elsewhere he had created a veritable furor. Manzoni accepted that genre which, unlike the lofty tragedy, afforded a place to the humble as well as the higher elements of life, and in 1827 his novel appeared under the title of *Fermo e Lucia* ("Fermo and Lucia"). He placed his characters in the seventeenth century; by obeying the democratic spirit of the times he made a peasant, Renzo Tramaglino, the hero. His concern for the humble and primitive sides of life marked an important stride towards modern art. The novel is simple in plot. Two young peasants, Renzo and Lucia, are in love and are about to be married, when Don Rodrigo, a profligate and boastful nobleman, prevents the marriage and tries to kidnap the girl. The latter flees to the city of Monza, where she is sheltered in a convent under the protection of a nun who has been forced to take the veil by family intrigues. The nun does not hesitate to help Don Rodrigo in getting possession of Lucia. The poor girl is in fact kidnapped and taken to the castle of another nobleman, the Innominato. Everything looks very gloomy for the two lovers when suddenly a change takes place and cholera advances like a nemesis for the enemies of good. The Innominato, moved by Lucia's tears, repents and takes her under his protection. Don Rodrigo dies of the plague and Lucia and Renzo are happily married by their guardian, Padre Cristoforo.

Historically, the novel has its basis in a history of Milan by Ripamonti and a volume of political economy by M. Gioia, whence Manzoni derived the historical background of the book. Gioia quotes several proclamations against people who interfered with marriages and he relates the cholera and the tumults in Milan in 1628. Ripamonti tells of a young woman compelled to take the veil by her family (the nun of Monza in Manzoni's novel) and of a nobleman who repented during the visit of Cardinal Borromeo to his diocese (the Innominato of the novel).

Psychologically, the novel sums up the tendencies of the generation of the first half of the nineteenth century. Manzoni took the historical novel and gave it a human content, expressing it in a clear and stately form. History is only a frame for the light which emanates from the humanity of his characters. We are no longer dealing with the sentimental passions of Pietro Metastasio nor with the heroic exploits of Vittorio Alfieri, the outstanding writers of the previous century. We are confronted in this novel by the unfolding of deeply human feelings, the love of Renzo and Lucia, the whim of Don Rodrigo, the tender maternal love of garrulous Agnese for her daughter Lucia, the struggle in the timorous heart of Don Abbondio, wavering between duty and dread of Don Rodrigo, the great courage of Padre Cristoforo, then the sudden and tragic stalking of cholera, and finally the pure joy of the two lovers who realize their dreams. These are the threads with which Manzoni has woven a picture of serene and true life.

There is one character on whom Manzoni has lavished the real warmth of his heart, with the result that it is one of the most familiar figures in Italian literature—Don Abbondio, a curate in a small village in Lombardy in the year 1628.

He has striven to create for himself a peaceful existence by avoiding heroic gestures against the injustices of the world. He has managed well to slip undisturbed through middle age when suddenly the intervention of the arrogant Don Rodrigo upsets the fragile structure of his dreams of peace. The sympathy with which Manzoni has fashioned this character and analyzed his weakness prompts one to feel that a bit of Don Abbondio may be found in Manzoni himself, just as the universal admiration for this character shows that there is a bit of Don Abbondio in all of us.

Manzoni's greatness consists in having given a measure to the ideal. The novel shows a dramatic struggle between good and evil, but the two contending forces do not exist in Manzoni's work as two abstractions. They are modified, moulded, humanized, by his sense of proportion. He has taken the conception of evil and has sketched Don Rodrigo as the embodiment of it, but soon his sense of the relative suggests to him another figure, the Innominato, who is a redeemed and humanized Don Rodrigo. Manzoni's sense of the relativity of human conditions makes him rebel against the absolute. He presents his Lucia with the pure and clear-cut contour of an honest country girl, but next to her there looms her antithesis, Donna Geltrude, the nun of Monza. Later the concept of woman breaks into a great variety of feminine forms, Donna Prassede, Perpetua, Agnese, Cecilia's mother and the picturesque group of Italian peasants that he has immortalized in his novel.

This process of relativity, struggling against the absolute, can be better studied in the characters of Cardinal Borromeo and Don Abbondio. The latter is a humanized type of the former who has passed through Manzoni's sense of the relative. The scene between the two characters when Cardinal Borromeo reproaches the timid Don Abbondio for having yielded to Don Rodrigo's order not to perform the marriage ceremony between Lucia and

Renzo takes on a deeper meaning and reveals the temperament of its great author if we look at it in this light. When Manzoni thought in the abstract of a minister of God, he conceived the lofty and stately figure of Cardinal Borromeo. But a feeling as if of uneasiness must have crept into the critical mind of Manzoni. The human traits that he had left out in fashioning that figure must have slowly presented themselves before him. Then the radiant light concentrated on Cardinal Borromeo must have revealed to his inquiring mind spots of darkness that have grown larger and larger. These zones of less vivid light were reflections from actual life, reminiscences of experience, actual experience that clamored for consideration and that the author embodied in the figure of Don Abbondio. Their dialogue reveals their nature as only a great artist like Manzoni can.

Cardinal Borromeo speaks abstractly and from the point of view of the "absolute" about the duties of a priest; but Don Abbondio puts forth the arguments of the "relative," his fear, for instance: "One cannot infuse courage into oneself," he replies. It is strange that actual life, life as a relative entity, justifies Don Abbondio against Borromeo. Don Rodrigo would have taken Don Abbondio's life had the latter disobeyed him, and he would have had Lucia kidnapped nevertheless. Did Padre Cristoforo not defy the wrath of the powerful lord? To what avail? This sense of the relative constitutes the very life of the novel; it brings action into it and it breaks forth constantly in the subtle humor of the author and it reveals itself in the amusing situations that only a close observer of actual life can transport into his art.

Manzoni stands on the very threshold of the nineteenth century as an outstanding master of modern Italian fiction. He is a synthesis of his times and he is close to us in that he sought a solution to the contradictions of life and used his art to express it.

. . . .

The height reached by Alessandro Manzoni in his novel constituted the zenith of Romantic fiction. As such, while it marked its highest point, it also determined its descent. The downward movement was characterized by the breaking of the marvelous unity between the actual and the ideal, between the absolute and the relative elements of life which was Manzoni's great innovation in art.

The disintegration of the historical novel can be studied in a group of men who were very closely associated with the author of *I Promessi Sposi:* Giovanni Rosini, 1776–1855; Tommaso Grossi, 1790–1853; Massimo d'Azeglio, 1798–1866; Cesare Cantù 1804–1895; and Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, 1814–1873.

Manzoni, in a letter to M. Fauriel, November 1821, had discussed his conception of the historical novel and had pointed out its chief characteristics. He wrote: "I conceive it [the historical novel] as the representation of an historical epoch by means of facts and sentiments so similar to reality as to make one believe that it is a true story."[2] He had also elucidated the method of composing it: "History only gives us events which are, so to say, known but on the surface. History, however, does not reveal what men thought, the sentiments which accompanied their deliberations and projects, their success and their misfortune, the speeches through which they made their passions prevail and expressed their wrath, revealed their sadness, in a word, expressed their individuality. All this constitutes the domain of art."[3]

Manzoni's imitators took this sort of formula, studied and dissected its elements, and set out to write historical novels. They composed, while Manzoni created. They replaced the master's spontaneity with a stereotyped attitude towards life. Being over-concerned with style and form, through lack of content they developed a lit-

[2] *Opere,* Vol. III, p. 78.

[3] Borgese, *Storia della critica romantica in Italia,* p. 170.

erature full of exotic, extraordinary, and striking elements. Francesco de Sanctis in his admirable work on this period of Italian literature has analyzed the disintegration of Manzoni in the works of his imitators. He has shown how most of the characters of Manzoni's disciples are but a sentimentalized copy of the master's creations.

The passing of the novel from the realism of Manzoni to the unreality of his followers can be briefly stated thus: Giovanni Rosini (*Luisa Strozzi*, 1833; *Conte Ugolino*, 1843) developed Manzoni's formula by enhancing the picturesque sides of historical characters. Tommaso Grossi (*Marco Visconti*, 1834) went to history in search of sentimental themes. Massimo d'Azeglio (*Ettore Fieramosca*, 1833; *Niccolò de' Lapi*, 1841), although he used the novel for a noble and patriotic purpose, sentimentalized his heroes in the romantic fashion. Cesare Cantù (*Margherita Pusterla*, 1838) and Guerrazzi (*La battaglia di Benevento* ["The Battle of Benevento"], 1828; *L'assedio di Firenze* ["The Siege of Florence"], 1836) developed the gloomy and bloody elements of history, reaching the grotesque of horror and pity.

As in all movements of disintegration, love became the main and predominating force in the novel, affording a one-sided and narrow attitude toward life. The conception of characters was also very artificial. We have, especially in Grossi, evanescent figures that border on decadence and make one long for the granite-like concreteness of Manzoni's characters. It is hard to conceive what further development the historical novel could have followed after the grotesque characteristics that it assumed under the hand of Manzoni's imitators.

The living elements that created the spontaneity and youth of the Romantic movement were exhausted. It was a question of plunging literature again into the tangibility of actual life and nature, thus opening a new cycle.

The new movement has passed into history under the name of Naturalism.

GIOVANNI VERGA (CATANIA, 1840–1922) AND THE NATURALISTIC MOVEMENT

Naturalism was a term and a sort of formula that the generation of the Seventies used in order to express what appeared *real* to them. The term *true* echoes in almost all the productions of the time. "I sing a miserable song, but I sing what is *true*," [4] sang the poet, Emilio Praga. The frequent use of the term indicates the violence with which the then young generation reacted against the declining Romanticism.

The disputes between the Naturalists and the Romanticists were as bitter as those between the Romanticists and the Pseudo-Classicists a few decades before. It is both curious and important to note that the young Naturalists found in the declining Romanticism the same limitations that the young Romanticists had found in the declining Pseudo-Classicism.

Lorenzo Stecchetti, Camillo Antona-Traversi, and Luigi Capuana express the same sentiments that Giovanni Berchet had voiced in his *Lettera di Grisostomo* ("Grisostomo's Letter"), in 1816, to indict the false ideals of Pseudo-Classicism.

The new men wanted a literature based on the study of their own times and of man as he *is* rather than of man as he *should be*, "the search for what is *true*, be it beautiful or ugly, life, the whole of life," [5] as Antona-Traversi expressed it. Another advocator of the new art, Lorenzo Stecchetti, in his *Nuova Polemica* ("New Controversy"), 1878, ridiculed the followers of Manzoni or the "Idealists" because they saw in man an ideal being patterned after the moral code of the Church. He wanted a direct study of man as nature and society made him. Capuana believed that the life of his times should be the subject-matter of fiction. "Our habits, our sentiments, our vices, our virtues, are waiting for their historian, for their painter, for their Balzac."[6] He wanted the novelist to study "the vast chaos of great sentiments, of ideas, of deeds, of misery, of abjectness which can be noticed in his own times."[7] The new novelist should "present in his novels the present generation."[8] Capuana uses the terms *nature* and *life* to express the new content that he wanted art to study.

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[4] *Poesie*, p. 72.

[5] Letter to Ferdinando Martini in *Le Rozeno*, p. 54.

Expressions like *nature* and *life* are worn out with usage. However, since the generations that have employed them have given a specific meaning to them, they convey to us specific meanings. Life for men like Capuana and Stecchetti represented existence on this planet, and art had the function of studying and analyzing it. It was a new way of repeating the Aristotelian and Scholastic canon that art is imitation of nature, although the value now given to nature and life was infinitely more complex. The new movement having appeared in a more developed environment brought about a literature with such distinct characteristics as to induce us to group together the works of that time, were their dates lost.

The tendency towards actual life served the purpose of diverting the novelists' attention from the perspective of history and of focusing it on the quaint beauty of the province. Italian fiction between 1860 and 1900 used the province almost exclusively as its background. Verga and Capuana created their great novels by presenting in them picturesque Sicily. Fogazzaro constantly brought the Valsolda Valley into his fiction. Young D'Annunzio filled his early works with stories of his native Abruzzi.

[6] *Studii sulla litteratura contemporanea*, Vol. II, p. 77.

[7] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 78.

[8] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 78.

Matilde Serao studied in her works the life of the people of Naples. Grazia Deledda brought into her novels the passionate shepherds of Sardinia.

This return to the study of provincial life was accompanied by the analysis of instinct and of passion, and by the accurate reproduction of them in fiction. These characteristics have been attributed to the influence of the scientific elements of French Naturalism. These elements, however, are but slightly evident in the Italian movement, which cannot boast of great theorists like Zola and De Goncourt.

The movement did not derive from formulas nor from theories. It was a part of the life of the time and the expression of a new state of mind which predominated in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The keynote of Italian life in the years that elapsed between the defeat of Custoza (July 23, 1848) and the Lybian War (1912) is the search for the tangible and concrete elements of reality, spurning its idealistic and lofty sides. In the eventful year 1848, darkened by the defeat of Custoza, Italian life took a new turn. Politically, the idealism of Giuseppe Mazzini and Vincenzo Gioberti (Romantic period) was succeeded by the realistic politics of Cavour, and the wars for Italian independence were followed by the Crimean War (1855). By participating in this struggle, Italy announced to the other nations that she was a European power and that she wished the place which her revived energies demanded. Political life from that time on was bent on the acquisition of colonies and on increasing national prestige.

This realistic trend is felt in every expression of the intellectual life of the country. Science took the place of the metaphysical investigation of Rosmini and Gioberti. Cesare Lombroso, Ausonio Franchi, and Angelo Mosso pursued the study of history and of man by basing it on the instinctive forces of life rather than on a metaphysical concept of spirit. Giosuè Carducci, who wrote a hymn to Satan, in whom he embodied progress, in opposition to the asceticism of the Middle Ages, expressed the mood and tendency of the generation which created the Naturalistic movement. In a letter to the poet Zendrini he stated that he wanted to "represent the vitality and victory of Naturalism and of Rationalism against the Church."[9]

Naturalism constituted the manhood of Europe, just as Romanticism represented its dreamy adolescence. During the Romantic period Europe and America realized their political unity. During the Naturalistic period the civilized world entered the phase of industrialism, and the economic struggle became the life-center of history.

The first reaction against the new conditions, as documented by fiction, was that of a bitter pessimism that darkened the first three decades of the new cycle (1850–1880). This generation is referred to as "the generation of suicide," and it formed a school that goes under the name of *Scapigliatura Milanese* ("The Disheveled Ones of Milan"). The young poets and authors of this group were known to be mentally unbalanced and to live a disorderly life given to gloomy thoughts, to lonely walks in cemeteries, and to hard drinking. Carlo Righetti (1830–1896) died in a stable, a victim of drugs. Igino Ugo Tarchetti (1841–1869) is remembered for his walking among the tombs of a cemetery in Milan. Giulio Pinchetti (1844–1869) committed suicide at the age of twenty-five. Giovanni Camarana (1845–1905) ended his life in Turin after having expressed in his poetry the bitterness of despondency and uncertainty. The poet Emilio Praga (1839–1875) invited the old idealistic Manzoni to die, as the age of the Anti-Christ was approaching and he saw the seven mortal sins kneeling in his own heart.

There is an ominous shadow hanging over their works. This is the reflection of the intellectual anguish of a generation that had to face new social, political, and religious conditions with the idealism of Hegel and Gioberti. The theory of evolution (Darwin's *The Origin of the Species*, 1859), the sudden change brought about by the application of machinery, the democratization of society, were all new facts that brought about pessimism and gloom. The fiction of Alfredo Oriani (1852–1909), of Carlo Dossi (1849–1910), of Alberto Cantoni (1841–1904), of Igino Ugo Tarchetti (1841–1869), reminds one of the wave of pessimism that swept over Europe after the Napoleonic wars.

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[9] *Opere,* Vol. IV, p. 265.

Giovanni Verga, the greatest and most stately figure of this period, showed in his youth the same pessimistic mood in several novels in which he arraigned modern social conditions, embodying his despair in restless and neurotic characters. In all his early novels, including *Una Peccatrice* ("A Sinner"), 1866, *Storia di una capinera* ("The Story of an Unfortunate Girl"), 1873, *Eva* ("Eve"), 1873, *Tigre Reale* ("A Tiger"), 1873, *Eros*, 1875, we find themes of tragedy and grief.

Young Verga had left his native Sicily and had moved to Florence, where the sad spectacle of the worldly and materialistic atmosphere of the new capital of Italy offended his lofty idealism. His attitude is best expressed in his preface to *Eva:* "Civilization is material progress, and at the bottom of it, when it is as absolute as it is today, you will find only material pleasure if you have the courage and intellectual honesty to be logical. In all the seriousness which we display and in all our hostility towards all that is not positive, there is only greed and lust. We are living in an atmosphere of banks and industrial enterprises and the fever of pleasure is the exuberance of such a life." [10]

Verga's vision of the world was inwardly dualistic, the ideal world and the actual world being conceived as antithetical. Hence his characters are suspended between the ardent aspirations of their souls and the weakness of the flesh that spells failure of their efforts. Whether we analyze the neurotic Pietro in *Una Peccatrice*, or Enrico in *Eva*, or Alberti in *Eros*, we find the same individual who through love is led into a tragic situation that only death can unravel. To these despairing and tragic characters there correspond women like Narcisa, Eva, Nata, Velleda, who under the appearance of charm and luxury hide a debased and sensual nature.

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[10] Preface to *Eva*, pp. 6–7.

Verga's heroes suffer from the same malady as their creator: lack of inner harmony, because their ideals are empty formulae. To what do their aspirations towards a noble life amount when their moral life consists only of words? Such is the case especially with the most perfect of these imperfect characters: Enrico Lanti in *Eva*. He is a young painter who ruins his life and career for Eva, a dancer who abandons him for a wealthy admirer. Enrico insults the latter, challenges him to a duel, kills him, and goes to his little town in Sicily to die of consumption. Is Enrico the idealist he claims to be? He himself speaks of lack of sincerity in his art, in his feelings, in his ideals, a confession made also by Pietro in *Una Peccatrice*. One can see, however, in these novels that the author is in an attitude of autocriticism trying to free himself of the very faults that he lends to these characters. Enrico Lanti, who returns to Sicily to be near his old abandoned mother, seems to be a symbol of Verga, who fashioned for himself a new art by leaving the worldly cities and their decadent inhabitants and by turning his attention to the humble people of Sicily. *Nedda* (1874) is a short story that marked a new direction in Verga's fiction and linked Verga to the Naturalistic school as conceived and defined by his great friend, Luigi Capuana.

Nedda is one of the poor peasant girls who go to neighboring villages to find work in the fields. She is silhouetted against the background of their wretched existence. We follow them to the fields, we hear their chat, we see them sleep in barns, men and women promiscuously heaped together.

Nedda's life is a cruel succession of heart-rending sorrows. She is the symbol of the Sicilian peasant girl and a bit of suffering humanity. Infinitely less complex than the women of the earlier novels, Nedda represents a great stride in Verga's career. Both she and the other characters are solid, concrete, and their emotions bear no trace of the abstract process that made the characters of *Tigre Reale* and *Eros* unreal and neurotic. Verga had now found his world: the study of life as he saw it in his native Sicily. *Nedda*, *Vita dei campi* ("Life in the Fields"), 1880; *Novelle rusticane* ("Rustic Stories"), 1883; *Cavalleria rusticana* ("Rustic Code of Honor"), 1883, are all sketches of this theme: small figures that claim access into Verga's art in the name of their "local color" and for the fact that they are truly alive.

In the contemplation of the simple country folk, Verga found a solace for the bitter disappointment of his youth, a new faith in life, and a new technique. The Sicilian fishermen gave him a new sense of human existence and it was so poignant that he planned to write a cyclical novel *I Vinti* ("The Vanquished") which was to consist of five books: *I Malavoglia* ("The Malavoglias"), *Don Gesualdo*, *La Contessa di Leyra* ("The Countess of Leyra"), *L' Onorevole Scipione* ("The Honorable Scipione"), and *L'Uomo di Lusso* ("The Man of Luxury"). Verga planned the novels to be "an objective and accurate" study of progress as embodied in the struggle for a livelihood of a family of fishermen of Trezza (*I Malavoglia*). Then the writer would study the efforts of the bourgeoisie to acquire wealth (*Don Gesualdo*). Later he would follow the contacts between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy (*La Contessa di Leyra*) and finally would witness the decadence of civilization through ambition (*L'Onorevole Scipione*) and effeminacy (*L'Uomo di Lusso*).

Verga wrote only two of these novels: *I Malavoglia* (1881) and *Mastro Don Gesualdo* (1888). He did not complete the cycle because the subject-matter about the decadence of civilization naturally gathered in the second novel, *Mastro Don Gesualdo.* Here we see how this stubborn worker rises from a simple mason to a very wealthy owner of sulphur mines. He marries his only daughter to a penniless and profligate nobleman of Palermo. We witness in their married life the corruption of the city and the vanity of the aristocracy. The uncouth Mastro Don Gesualdo, after his wife's death, driven to despair by the revolting peasants and miners, goes to live in Palermo in the palace of his daughter and moves like a melancholy ghost in the corruption and vanity of that life.

Verga's fame justly rests on *I Malavoglia.* The novel embodies a new synthesis of life and an answer to the skeptical attitude of Verga's generation towards progress and civilization. He found the answer in the tenacity and courage of the simple fishermen of Trezza. Life is to go on and on, tenaciously, having a humble goal in sight and giving to it all our strength and faith.

So did the Malavoglias, a family who, under the wise direction of Paron Ntoni, the grandfather, had honestly and quietly made their living by fishing. They were poor but they had enough to live on and they owned the *Provvidenza,* a fishing boat that was the pride and love of the family. In trying to enlarge their business, they lost everything and had to sell even their homestead. After a long sequel of unhappy events, one of the grandchildren, Alessi, strong and tenacious, a true Malavoglia, continued the traditions of the family and succeeded in buying back the homestead.

Characters and events are not merely sketched. They are taken from life bodily and made to continue to live in the novel. In the background there looms the battle of Lissa, and Sicily in the throes of adapting itself to the laws of the new kingdom, but the foreground is occupied by the everyday life of the fisher folk. They do not follow any inner call, any plan; no high ideal lures them. They just move on and on because they must obey the urge of life. Yet, in the fringes of the picture there spreads a light which gives significance to their every act and clothes them with the sanctity of life: Verga's faith that even these small people, although vanquished and crushed, serve the cause of progress.

The novel marks a moment of calm in Verga's life. He resumes his inquiring mood which he had already portrayed in Enrico Lanti. Now, however, Verga's answer is not disconsolate and tragic. Life is toil, and toil obeys the urge of a universal rhythm. Life is struggle, often tragedy, but it leads to universal progress through the sacrifice of the individual. This belief, serene and deep, spreads a halo of grandeur over the simple fishermen of Trezza. Old Paron Ntoni, who plods on his weary way, stumbles, falls, rises, and tramps on, is a humble figure, yet great, with all the sublimity of life.

The author finds solace in the resignation of his characters and in the cult of family life. At this time Sicily was for Verga a consoling memory. As he moved among the corruption of the Florentine and the Milanese society, he sought courage and consolation in the humble figures whom he had known in his childhood and who were hidden in a secret nook in his heart. Sicily became an ideal refuge for him and for this reason his characters are surrounded by the warmth of his sympathy. Only an artist and a man like Verga could use in his descriptions such subdued tones with such deep effects. A little girl, a neighbor of the Malavoglias, lighted a lamp, and began in great haste to prepare everything for supper while her small brothers followed her through the little room so that "she appeared like a hen with all her chicks." [11] Ntoni, a grandchild, goes to do his military service. Grandfather Ntoni and his mother silently return home after seeing him off. "Grandfather, like a man, did not say anything, but he, too, felt a lump in his throat and avoided looking at his daughter-in-law, as if he bore her a grudge." [12]

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[11] *I Malavoglia*, p. 19.

Even animals and inanimate objects assume the warmth of living things when they pass through Verga's art. The Malavoglias have their fishing boat patched and they rig it again: "Meanwhile, the *Provvidenza* had slid into the sea like a duck, with its beak in the air, and it splashed, enjoying the cool breeze, softly wafted by the green waters that washed against its sides while the sun danced on the new paint." [13] "'Tonight I have heard the black hen cackle,' says Longa to Paron Ntoni, fearing a misfortune. 'Poor hen,' exclaimed the old man smiling, upon seeing the black hen walking through the yard, her tail in the air and her crest on her ear, unaware of all this. 'Poor hen! She, too, lays one egg every day.'" [14] The hen is part of the family and it shares its struggle to buy back the old home.

In these modest heroes Verga found again his faith in the purity and spontaneity of life. Out of this feeling he fashioned Mena, the eldest girl of the Malavoglias. "The stars twinkled brightly, as if they were burning. The sea rumbled at the end of the little street, very softly, and at long intervals one heard the noise of a cart that passed in the darkness, shaking on the stones as it went through the world which is so large that if one could walk and walk continuously day and night one could never arrive at the end." [15] So humble poetry blooms in the art of Verga and in Mena's heart when neighbor Alfio talks discreetly to her about a hope which he cherishes, a hope that is never realized, as Mena takes the place of her mother when the latter dies during an epidemic. Mena, too, looks like a hen among her chicks. Life was sad for her as for grandfather Ntoni, but they had a goal, that of buying back their home and they attained it.

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[12] *I Malavoglia*, p. 9.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

There is in the novel the love that glows in the heart of the Italian peasant for his shabby hut. Paron Ntoni is the glorification of the innate virtues of the people, sober and tenacious to the last. There is also in the book the religion of the home. Woe to us if we betray it! Young Ntoni does and he goes wrong. When he leaves the prison and returns home, he cannot remain. He has broken his pact with life, so he must leave the little house where everything is as it used to be before Paron Ntoni died. Now the home belongs to Alessi, to the true Malavoglia, silent and tenacious. Mena is there, too, and in the stable there is a young calf and a hen with her chicks. The same noises are heard in the village, the same voices, the same steps, and the same boats begin their day on the sea, which is lighted by the new dawn. That life is so sweet to Ntoni, the home of the Malavoglias so inviting, but he must pick up his bag and go towards the unknown. He has not been a true Malavoglia.

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

(Vicenza, 1842–1911)

Antonio Fogazzaro is, like Verga, an acknowledged master of modern Italian fiction. The height of his creative power came later than that of the Sicilian writer, since *Piccolo Mondo Antico* ("Little Old World") was published in 1896, while the *Malavoglias* appeared in 1881. Antonio Fogazzaro in his restlessness is closer to the modern Italian temperament than is Verga. He is more sensitive, but he is also more neurotic. He enlarges the boundary of fiction, but he loses the compact unity that one admires in Verga. He offers a greater variety of human emotions, but greater complications as well.

Italian criticism has been, on the whole, rather unjust to Antonio Fogazzaro. Benedetto Croce, Luigi Russo, and Mario Puccini have fashioned a decadent Fogazzaro by focusing their attention either on his early works (*Miranda*, 1874; *Malombra*, 1881), or on the last (*Il Santo* ["The Saint"], 1906; *Leila*, 1911).

Benedetto Croce discards altogether Fogazzaro's political, social, and religious ideas, reducing the latter's art to his sense of humor, to the tenderness of his sentiment, and to his psychological insight. It seems to us that a critic, rather than discuss the intrinsic soundness of ideas, should notice only whether those beliefs have become a part of the drama that unfolds in the novel. What is forever sound and lasting?

This indictment prevents Croce from seeing Fogazzaro's greatness. Instead, he accuses him of possessing "ethics that leave one perplexed, made up as they are of sensual and pathological elements, ethics that savor of pleasure and sensuality."[16] This is the chief charge against Fogazzaro's fiction, and it is a very serious one. We feel, however, that, without neglecting the weakest novels of the writer, we should form an idea of his temperament and art by studying the works that he produced at the height of his career.

Fogazzaro's development can be traced by analyzing three of his novels, in which are reflected three distinct phases of his life: *Malombra*, *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, and *Il Santo*. They represent, in turn, the stage of Fogazzaro's uncertainty both in ideas and in art, the fullness of his greatness, and finally the declining phase of his art.

Malombra is, on the whole, an orgy of exoticism, in which extraordinary situations and neurotic characters make one think of the unbridled fancy of a young writer, although the author was nearing forty when he wrote it. He presents in it a highly neurotic character, Marina, a beautiful young woman, who lives in a lonely castle with a distant relative, Count Cesare Ormengo. There is an instinctive hostility between them, which breaks forth when she comes upon a letter written by one of her ancestors, Cecilia Varrega, a woman who was kept prisoner and tormented by her husband because of her love for a young man called Renato. Marina believes that Cecilia is reincarnated in her and that she has to avenge her in the person of Count Cesare. In fact, one night she goes into his room, shouts her hatred of him, and causes the old count to die of a paralytic stroke. Marina loves Corrado Silla, a restless and sensitive youth, whom she believes to be Renato. When Silla fails to play his rôle by confessing that he does not remember any former existence, she shoots him and mysteriously disappears.

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[16] *La letteratura della nuova Italia*, Vol. IV, p. 130.

There are numerous elements in this sketchy account of the plot that might justify the charges of Fogazzaro's critics.

Some characters are unquestionably neurotic and unbalanced, but next to them there are others who are their very antithesis. If Marina and Silla are supersensitive beings and express Fogazzaro's interest in spiritualism, Don Innocenzo, a peaceful curate, and Edith, a German girl, who lives in the palace with her father, Steinegge, the Count's secretary, are characters who embody the calm and sweetness that religion gave to our ancestors.

It is the same with the love strain in the novel. There is the unhealthy love of Marina and Silla but there is also the beautiful love that Edith feels for Silla, who, in his infatuation for Marina, fails to see its beauty. Fogazzaro pictures perfectly this love through his intimate and discreet sensitiveness, and Edith looms in the novel in sharp contrast with Marina.

There is in the story a crowd of characters who are really alive: the servants, the coachman, Marina's private maid, the Countess Salvadore and her son, Nepo, a gaunt, shadowy, monocled nobleman who aspires to marry Marina and is duped by her. All these characters bring to the novel the breath of actual life and testify to Fogazzaro's power of observation, which breaks forth in charming sallies of humor.

There is also in the novel the author's exquisite sense of nature: "The night was dark, a few stars shone in the foggy sky, among the enormous dark mountains which sank their shadows in the lake." [17] One finds in this book Fogazzaro's power to sketch those odd characters who are found only in the out-of-the-way nooks of the province. "Poor Don Innocenzo, short-sighted, embarrassed, could not recognize anybody, spoke to the wrong people, apologized, sucked air through puckered lips, as if the floor were burning under his feet." [18]

On the whole, there is in *Malombra* the aspiration towards a wholesome ideal of life which is crowded out by the author's restless fancy. *Malombra*, however, is a novel of autocriticism through which Fogazzaro rids himself of the intellectualism that he embodies in Silla and Marina. It is, above all, the novel which paves the way, with *Daniele Cortis* (1885), to his masterpiece, *Piccolo Mondo Antico.*

There is, in this latter novel, the everyday life of the Valsolda, a picturesque valley in northern Italy, dear to Fogazzaro. He lived there all his life and used it as the background of most of his novels.

Fogazzaro sketches in the book the conditions of Italy in 1851, when the people, under the Austrian rule, not being allowed to talk politics, played cards and discussed the enmities, alliances, and wars of their Kings and Queens and Jacks. In this sleepy and quaint atmosphere, enclosed by gigantic peaks and lulled by the lapping of the waters of a lake, Fogazzaro places Franco Maironi, who is ill at ease in the society of Grandmother Maironi. "The Marchioness kept her outward marblelike placidity, although in her heart she bore a grudge against her grandson."[19] There is an abyss between her and Franco, between her generation and Franco's. She is conservative and accepts the Austrian rule. Franco is a liberal and hopes to see Italy free.

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[17] *Malombra*, Vol. II, p. 68.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

The contrast of ideas is accentuated by the fact that Franco marries Luisa, a girl who is socially below him. Fogazzaro has fashioned in them two of the most perfect characters of his fiction. Franco, tall, slender, with a mobile and open face, is somewhat of a mystic, a lover of nature. in the beauty and purity of which he constantly feels the presence of the Divinity. Luisa is well poised, almost cold, without the feverish imagination of her husband. Unlike him, she is not religious.

These differences of temperament and belief gradually create a barrier between the two. Franco feels her aloofness and suffers in silence. Luisa assures him that she loves him, "but ultimately she felt that he was right. A tenacious, haughty feeling of intellectual independence fought against her love."[20]

Fogazzaro analyzes and dissects Franco's heart through Luisa's logical and penetrating mind. Is he truly religious? It seems to her that mysticism goes hand in hand with worldliness in him, as he loves the sensuous beauty of a rose and delights in passionate music. Luisa realizes this more and more, and her love for Franco is chilled. It is the year 1853; there are rumors of war between Italy and Austria, alliances between Italy and France, Italy and England. One evening some friends bring hopeful news to Franco and to his wife. It was a peaceful night. "How strange to contemplate the lonely quietness with the idea of an approaching war. The mountains, dark and sad, seemed to ponder over the formidable future."[21] In the enthusiasm that both Luisa and Franco share, their souls come closer than ever before. "He took her face in his hands, kissed her hair over and over again and said softly, 'Dear, just think how great this Italy of ours will be afterwards!'"[22]

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[19] *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, p. 17.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

A tragic event meanwhile comes to test Franco's and Luisa's strength. Their only child, little Maria, falls into the lake and drowns. Luisa is compelled to acknowledge that Franco possesses a strength that she does not have. While she frantically struggles against the inexplicable, Franco finds solace in his faith. For over three years they are separated because Franco, pursued by the Austrian police, flees to Turin and waits there for the day of war against Austria. The war comes and brings a new dawn for Italy and also a perfect understanding between Franco and Luisa.

These are the bare threads on which the novel is woven. The rest, which constitutes a very vital part of the book, is formed by quaint figures, good and bad, of the old world in which Fogazzaro grew and of which he was a part: Pietro Ribera, Luisa's uncle, the odd professor Gilardoni, sentimental and awkward, the deaf and timid Mrs. Pasotti, her haughty and deceitful husband, and little Maria, whose death brings grief even to the reader.

Fogazzaro's art in *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, woven out of religion, love, and patriotism, strikes the most profound and tender chords of the human heart. These forces are not studied in an abstract way, but they are noticed as they exist in the life of the characters. They determine, in this fashion, spiritual contrasts, they bring joy and sorrow, they throw on the little old world a mobile playing of light and darkness that creates a stirring drama in the peaceful and uneventful life of the Valsolda valley.

When we pass from *Piccolo Mondo Antico* to *Il Santo* we find, to be sure, the same Fogazzaro, but a Fogazzaro who offers more mellow tones, more passion, more languor, in short, a weakened Fogazzaro. His art has become more refined, more polished, but it has lost the strength of *Piccolo Mondo Antico*.

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[22] *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, p. 187.

The central figure of *Il Santo* is Piero Maironi, the son of Franco and Luisa. The author had already presented him in another novel, *Piccolo Mondo Moderno* ("Little Modern World"), 1900, in which he studies the restless and passionate youth of Piero who marries and, while his wife is in a sanatorium, falls in love with Jeanne Dessalle. Jeanne is a weak and sentimentalized Luisa, in the same way that Piero is infinitely more neurotic than his father, Franco. In *Il Santo*, Piero Maironi, after his wife's death, has left the world and lives in prayer and fasting at Subiaco, in a Benedictine monastery. We hear the account of his holy life, the fame of which reaches even the Pope, who receives him, and to whom Piero outlines a reform of the Church.

Religion contributes here the main motif, yet love, and even passion, are as much in evidence as religion, thus giving to the latter a morbid meaning, a reflection of sensuality that justifies the strictures that this book received from most critics. This can be said not only of Piero and Jeanne Dessalle but of other characters as well. Giovanni Selva, for instance, a friend of Piero Maironi, through his mystic writings meets Marie D'Arxel and they kindle love in her.

Religion is here at the service of an over-refined and worldly society. We do not say that Fogazzaro did not have the right to fashion these characters. We merely state that a frivolous atmosphere predominates here and it creates a perplexing contrast with the religious content of the novel.

Il Santo was put in the Index and Fogazzaro was excommunicated. He grieved very much over this fact, repudiated his ideas, and wrote *Leila* (1911), in order to justify himself. The novel, in its generating motif, is very weak. The author disguises himself as Alberti, a disciple of Piero Maironi, and he shows us that Alberti has become very obedient to the church. It is entirely polemical, and we constantly long for the beauty of the Valsolda and the characters Fogazzaro placed in it for the joy of all who love a wholesome literature.

In spite of adverse criticism, Fogazzaro remains one of the great writers of modern Italy. His characters are the perfect reflection of that unique aristocracy of northern Italy that never lost the taste of country life, and never became worldly enough to be degenerate. There were among them charming old gentlemen who delighted in quoting Horace and Vergil, and ladies who spoke discreetly of a love affair on their way to and from church, where they prayed, some with their hearts, some with their lips. Fogazzaro bore many traits of this exclusive and charming society, of which he was a popular member. As such, he has produced a work that has caught the fancy of the present generation, which has shown a keen interest in him.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

(Pescara, Abruzzi, 1863—)

Gabriele D'Annunzio marks the decadence of Naturalism. Not, indeed, a melancholy and sad decline, but one which reminds the reader of a tropical sunset: a gorgeous blood-red sky, while the earth exhales its most penetrating perfumes and passions burst forth with the violence of a volcano.

D'Annunzio derives his art from Naturalism, as evidenced by his descriptions of the minutest details, by his study of country life, and by the analysis of sensations.

In him, however, Naturalism is accompanied by an extreme aestheticism, for D'Annunzio is a highly sophisticated writer who constantly seeks the beauty of expression and of words, and sets the analysis of passion as the chief goal for his art. If we compare him with Verga, Fogazzaro, and other great contemporaries who did not take lust as an end in itself but as a means of creating spiritual contrasts and drama, D'Annunzio is a decadent.

In D'Annunzio, morality, conscience, and thought are absent, and they are replaced by the author's belief that life is wholly in the senses. This belief makes him a perfect artist in the field of sensations, but causes him also to disregard the study of regions in the human heart which lie deeper than our senses. D'Annunzio clings constantly to the illusion that man is all sensation. Without discussing the intrinsic merits of such a belief, we feel that it is the duty of criticism to explain its origin, and to study its effects on the author.

D'Annunzio's first book, *Primo vere* ("Spring"), published in 1879, when he was only seventeen, was written in the primitive province of Abruzzi, where he spent his youth. After wavering between themes derived from Giosuè Carducci (Neoclassicism) and from Giovanni Verga (Naturalism), D'Annunzio found his own way and resolutely followed it. Rejecting Carducci's ethical content and Verga's mystic grief, he unfalteringly proclaimed his faith in a joyous Materialism. Life became for him the exalted expression of all the senses of a youth eager to grasp it like a mellow fruit and suck with greedy lips all its richness.

At this time, the young poet was fully aware that two modes of life lay before him: one that consisted in facing the mystery of life, another that urged him to ignore this mystery and to live wholly in his senses. He asks of a friend: "Is it important, my friend, to meditate in our deep souls on the uncertain human destinies? To weep over fleeting time, to obscure with vain melancholy the Earth, fecund Goddess?" He knows that this meditation over life implies a moral sense, and to silence his conscience he bluntly decides: "In this fatal work of mine, I love to lose my virtues, one by one." Once virtue (ethical conciousness) is denied, the world of instinct rises limpid and joyous before him and he sings: "Holy is the flesh. It is the immortal rose which throbs in the vermilion blood. It is the mother of man, and it is the daughter, and it stands above everything else." D'Annunzio has now fashioned his philosophy, and he continues: "I no longer desire the sweetness of ideal love, no longer songs filled with milk and honey, no longer gentle dances among flowers at the sunset hour, no longer feminine bewailing, no longer languor. Fly, O Satan, fly on your fiery wings. Stand by me and inspire me. I am all yours."[23] It is the Satan of Carducci but with a new meaning; no longer progress, but sensuality.

Primo vere, an essentially lyric period, was followed by *Terra vergine* ("Virgin Soil"), 1882, by the *Libro delle Vergini* ("Book of the Virgins"), 1884, and by *San Pantaleone* ("St. Pantaleone"), 1886, three collections of short stories in which the author reveals his dionysiac sense of life by portraying peasant men and women as he saw them in the quiet country of Abruzzi. The world appears to him as pure sensuality, and he succeeds in etching out strong figures and in analyzing the primitiveness of his characters with the exactness required by Naturalism.

It is practically the same interest that led Verga to study the humble fisherman of Sicily, but D'Annunzio being endowed with a sensual temperament cannot feel the humble simplicity of his characters. Egotistical and lustful, he sees in them his own passion, and the whole of nature seems to partake of the flame that burns in men and animals alike. *Terra vergine* relates the love of Tulespe, a swineherd, for Flora, a young shepherdess. "Flora sang and the purple sky opened on the wholesome, serene, young strength of plants, of beasts, of man."[24] It is the same in *Fra Lucerta*

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[23] *Primo vere*, p. 44.

[24] *Terra vergine*, p. 195.

("Father Lucerta") in which a friar, tortured by passion, grieves over his youth which withers away in a damp and dark convent. In *Le Vergini* ("The Virgins"), he analyzes the physiological life of Giuliana, a girl who is convalescing from typhus and feels life ebbing back into her veins, until she is contaminated by a repulsive cripple.

This period is to us the best of D'Annunzio's career. His characters are still human enough to be conscious of the morality or immorality of their acts. In *Nell' assenza di Lanciotto* ("During the Absence of Lanciotto"), the author says of Francesca and Gustavo, who betray the absent Lanciotto, "They avoided everything that might lead them to an introspective analysis of their conscience." [25] This factor, conscience, disappears later on, and its elimination brings about an art which lies outside of life and humanity. There is in these short stories a freshness and spontaneity in the very description of nature which is lost altogether in the rococo pictures that weigh down his later fiction.

In *San Pantaleone*, published after five years of residence in Rome, the joyous sense of life that we have noticed gives place to an exaggerated description of the Abruzzi and to a pathological delight in bloody scenes. Men are here transformed into heroic and barbaric beings of gigantic proportions, herculean strength, and savage looks. Their deeds are naturally heroic. One of them in *L'Eroe* ("The Hero"), having had his hand crushed by the weight of a saint's statue, goes to the church and cuts off this crushed member as an offering to the patron saint. *Gli Idolatri* ("The Idolaters") relates a struggle to a finish between two towns, waged on account of religious enmity and jealousy. In the *Martirio di Gialluca* ("The Martyrdom of Gialluca"), we are told of a sailor who developed gangrene in his arm while on the high seas. His limb is slowly cut off piece by piece by the members of the crew, who finally, upon his death, cast him overboard. Here the life and the people of his native Pescara only afford to D'Annunzio the opportunity for a display of style. It is the end of the cycle.

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[25] *Libri delle Vergini*, p. 159.

When the author left his native town and went to Rome, he faced a dilemma: either to renew himself or to continue the same theme—the flesh is sacred. There was in him the aspiration towards an heroic life, infinitely larger than the one afforded by the picturesque and passionate peasants of the Abruzzi. Upon leaving the rocky Apennines he had sung: "I am hastening to the struggle. Unknown knight, in dark armor, I ride through the rough country and a great thought glows in my haughty eyes."[26] What were the struggles of which he dreamed? He does not say, but they were most certainly not those to which he dedicated himself in the gay Rome of the Eighties.

Already well-known because of his poems, he was received by the Sommaruga Society and that group helped to enslave his art to images. The Sommaruga Society was formed in the early Eighties by a group of poets, writers, and artists who gathered around Angelo Sommaruga, a wealthy member of the Roman aristocracy. They wanted to react against the rising democracy and to continue the noble, artistic traditions of Italy which seemed grossly offended by the bourgeoisie. They published various journals: first, the *Cronaca Bizantina*, then the *Capitan Fracassa* and finally, in 1892, the *Convito*, edited by the poet Adolfo de Bosis.

Edoardo Scarfoglio, then editor of *Capitan Fracassa* and an intimate friend of D'Annunzio, has pictured for us the change that the young poet underwent upon going to Rome. "I shall never forget the astonishment that I experienced upon seeing Gabriele for the first time adorned, meticulously dressed, to go to a dinner. The year before we had never been able to persuade him to wear anything except a dark coat and a necktie of white satin. Often he even forgot his tie."[27]

[26] *Canto Nuovo*, 205.

[27] *Il Libro di Don Chisciotte*, p. 159.

Scarfoglio also tells of the sort of life that the young D'Annunzio indulged in while in Rome. "Gabriele recklessly plunged into the new and stupid life. The ladies, before that tamed little wild man, that pet dog with a silk ribbon around his neck, were seized by morbid and romantic admiration." [28]

D'Annunzio wrote fiction and poetry for them and used as content for his art his own and their love affairs. It is here that his falsity begins, as he tried to stifle his aspiration towards a thoughtful, creative life, in order to live in a frivolous manner. His way of living accounts for the continuation of the theme which he had already expressed in the works of his early youth. As an adolescent, living in the primitive surroundings of the Abruzzi, he had identified life with sensuality. He continued to do the same while dealing with a complex, modern civilization and with individuals as sophisticated and complicated as the heroes and heroines of his novels.

His fiction from *Il Piacere* ("Pleasure"), 1889, to *Forse che si, forse che no* ("Perhaps Yes, Perhaps No"), 1910, represents a brilliant treatment of the queries: What is pleasure? What is passion? Can we find in them happiness and the goal of our existence?

Il Piacere presents a sybarite, Andrea Sperelli, a Roman aristocrat, the lover of the beautiful and noble Elena Muti. Their happiness is interrupted when she leaves Rome and marries a wealthy Englishman. Upon her return to Rome, Sperelli wants to resume their love affair, but she refuses. A duel with a rival follows and Sperelli is gravely wounded. While he is hovering between life and death, there comes into his life a lovely lady, Donna Maria, who falls in love with him and later becomes his mistress, although he still loves Elena. This is the thin thread that can be singled out from the detailed account of Roman social life.

Andrea Sperelli is the most human of D'Annunzio's characters. The author is conscious of his hero's falsity and analyzes him thus: "The verbal and plastic expression of his sentiments was so artificial, so remote from simplicity and sincerity, that he always, through force of habit, *prepared* himself even in the gravest moments of his life."[29] We are told of him: "His will, in abdicating, had yielded to instinct, aesthetic sense had taken the place of moral sense."[30] The author openly calls him a "corrupted and effeminate youth."[31]

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[28] *Il Libro di Don Chisciotte*, p. 160.

Il Piacere remains the best of D'Annunzio's novels, for the query "What is pleasure?" instills life in the tiresome account of Sperelli's amour. There are in the book two contradictory answers. In the dedication, addressed to his dear friend, the great painter, Francesco Michetti, he proposes as an answer "the misery of pleasure." The novel itself contains, on the contrary, the glorification of it. Never had the apotheosis of pleasure been made in more glowing and glorious terms. Pleasure is the very soul of the book, a pleasure that transcends the realm of sensations and envelops everything that surrounds the two lovers. It permeates the flowers, the perfumes; it reflects itself in the exquisite beauty of old furniture. The creations of the artists of every century and of every country—Titian and Ghirlandaio, Lawrence and Gainsborough, are invited to add charm to the experience of sensuality. The greater part of the book is devoted to a detailed account of the exalted passion of Andrea Sperelli and Elena Muti. It is a new *ars amandi* that eclipses everything else which has been written on the theme of pleasure and love.

For this very reason, however, the misery of pleasure remains a dead theme in the novel. At best, D'Annunzio shows the perversity of pleasure. Misery of pleasure implies detachment from it, nausea of it, yet, in the novel, Andrea Sperelli sets pleasure as the only goal of his life.

[29] *Il Piacere*, p. 15.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

His sense of the misery of pleasure is determined by the fact that he cannot have Elena's favors again, rather than by his renunciation of pleasure. We find in the novel remarks of this sort: "Her voice was so penetrating that it gave almost the sensation of a voluptuous caress." [32] And again, "There are glances of a woman that a man who loves her would not exchange for the possession of her whole body." [33] Thus, the theme that D'Annunzio had proposed to develop is overwhelmed by his own sensual temperament.

Many pages, however, offer us fragments of pure beauty, as in the description of the soft beauty of a rose, the charm of a painting, or the grandeur of Rome. "From one of the vases fell the petals of a white rose. They fell, one by one, languid, delicate, with something feminine in them, something partaking of the nature of the human flesh. The petals, concave, alighted gently on the marble, like snowflakes that gently fall." [34] Rome appears to him thus: "It was a cold and serene January night, one of those prodigious winter nights that transform Rome into a silver city enclosed in a diamond sphere. The full moon poured over the earth the triple purity of light, ice, and silence." [35] A child is thus described: "She was as frail and vibrating as an instrument made of sensitive material. Her limbs were so delicate that they seemed unable to hide or even veil the splendor of her spirit which lived within them like a flame in a precious lamp." [36] One could find many such passages which reveal D'Annunzio's sensitiveness and craftsmanship.

As a whole, however, the novel is weak. The author has exercised his sensitiveness only on the subject of lust, which creeps into everything and dwarfs his sense of life, render-

[32] *Il Piacere*, p. 57.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 368.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

ing sterile the aspirations towards a superior life, to which his characters constantly refer. We read: "They, admirably formed in spirit and body for the exercise of all the highest and rarest pleasures, sought without ceasing the Highest, the Unsurpassable, the Unattainable."[37] When we learn that these expectations culminate in the possession of the body, we realize that D'Annunzio, by excluding the deeper and loftier sides of life, has reduced his art to a wordy glorification of empty concepts.

The years 1892–1894 were very active ones in D'Annunzio's literary life, since he completed then three complex novels: *Giovanni Piscopo*, 1892; *L'Innocente* ("The Innocent"), 1892; and *Il trionfo della morte* ("The Triumph of Death"), 1894.

Giovanni Piscopo tells of the depravity of the hero who wastes his life in drinking and in the love of a sensual woman, Ginevra. While, in the beginning, D'Annunzio assumes a hostile attitude toward their weakness, he is gradually won over by his interest in their passion and he experiences pleasure in probing into it.

The original theme in *L'Innocente* is pity in the heart of Tullio Hermil, who finds it necessary to remove the little child that was born to his wife while they were separated. Tullio relates this story himself, and as the plot develops, he forgets his pity for the tender life that he has suppressed and plunges into a verbose exaltation of Giuliana, his wife.

A similar situation exists in *Il trionfo della morte*, in which D'Annunzio strives to portray the turbid uncertainty that poisons Giorgio Aurispa's love for his mistress, Ippolita, a woman of the bourgeoisie. In the first pages of the novel we find Giorgio tormenting himself because he feels that he cannot be sure that Ippolita is wholly his. How can he read her mind? "If I could see her soul and if I saw passing through it a desire, I should believe my love offended and should almost die of grief."[38] This motif, however, is

[37] *Il Piacere*, p. 120.

[38] *Il trionfo della morte*, p. 15.

entirely lost in the account of the lovers' intimate life and in the paramount importance given to passion.

In the preface to *Giovanni Piscopo*, the novelist states that it is a question of "renewing oneself or of dying." Why such a statement? We take it to be a proof of the author's uneasiness upon being confronted by the necessity of continuing the theme of his early works—the holiness of the flesh—or of changing his mode of living and hence his art.

In the above-mentioned novels the theme remains the same as in *Il Piacere*. D'Annunzio is still asking himself whether or not passion is the great dream and goal of life. Apparently the novelist wants to show that lust creates in us an unspeakable void. Giorgio Aurispa, in *Il trionfo della morte*, proclaims that "the true, deep, sensual communion is a sheer chimera." [39] Yet the very insistence on this theme and the adjectives *true* and *deep* show that the author was more steeped in his subject-matter than he was in the days of *Il Piacere*.

He cannot look at nature without reacting in a sensual way to it. Every page bears the marks of the obsession of lust. The whole of life seems to burn with its impure flame. The simplest words are corrupted and the most normal and sacred functions are made unclean by it. In *L'Innocente*, Giuliana, expecting a child, is depicted by her husband in terms that make unholy even motherhood. D'Annunzio has corrupted the very Italian vocabulary. *Donna* (woman) is constantly replaced by *femmina* (female); *uomo* (man) by *maschio* (male). The terminology of the sacred objects of the church has been used to kindle and complicate lust—a "bed" becomes an "altar."

Are these great novels? The inner and ideal texture of the novel is entirely lacking. Their interest rests on the pictorial skill of the writer, whether he describes the flowers of Villa Lilla and the hieratic grandeur of the sower in

[39] *Il trionfo della morte*, p. 217.

L'Innocente or the pilgrimage of Casalbordino and Wagner's symphony in *Il trionfo della morte.*

Love now appears accompanied by death, and the heroes, not finding in passion what they expect, kill their lovers while they still thirst for a deeper and more perfect passion. At this point, we notice the appearance of the thesis: Have these individuals the right to kill?

In the opening paragraph of *L'Innocente*, Tullio Hermil confesses his crime of having suppressed an innocent life, but adds: "The justice of men does not touch me. No tribunal would know how to convict me." [40] Until now, D'Annunzio had moved within the circle of the bourgeois morality. Now he creates for himself the so-called *morale eroica*, the moral code of the superman.

It is at this point that there appears in his works the superman that Nietzsche had fashioned. D'Annunzio uses him as a means of giving free play to his theme of lust which can be restated thus: "Everything is permissible, provided we realize the dream of a perfect passion."

To us, by adopting the morality of the superman, D'Annunzio placed his fiction outside the realm of true and human art. We do not deny to him the right of fashioning a superman. We contend that his superman bears only the name, and that his deeds are only the complication of sexual activity, and as such we cannot accept them as exploits of a superior life.

D'Annunzio envelops the queer mixture of sensuality and grandeur in the veils of symbolism, but the only factor that stands out is the theme of his first book: sensuality.

To this stage belong the most decadent of D'Annunzio's novels: *Le Vergini delle Rocce* ("The Maidens of the Rocks"), 1896, *Il Fuoco* ("The Flame of Life"), 1900, and *Forse che si, forse che no* ("Perhaps Yes, Perhaps No"), 1910. The author has now reached the firm belief that lust is the supreme goal of man and that we must disobey human laws and morality that try to restrain it. We cannot conceive that D'Annunzio believed such a thesis. To us, this absurd axiom is a rhetorical means of continuing the theme of the sanctity of the flesh.

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[40] *L'Innocente*, p. 1.

In *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, as in the preceding novels, we find the contrast between aspiration and actual realization. The initial motif is embodied in Claudio Cantelmo's desire to realize in himself the ideal human type cherished by Socrates and Leonardo in order to save Italy from the violence of the mob. Drifting into symbolism he states that from him and from three beautiful sisters living in an old ancestral palace will be born the new king of Rome. These are but words that resound high but empty over the passion of Claudio Cantelmo for the three sisters.

More empty and heavy with moral misery is *Il Fuoco* ("The Flame of Life"), 1900, in which the poet shamelessly reveals his love affair with the great actress Eleonora Duse. The motif is polemical, as he wants to affirm his right to abandon her after he tired of her. He disguises himself as Stelio Effrena and Duse as Foscarina, a great actress whom the crowd desires and he possesses.

Stelio is presented as a superman, but what has he done to justify such a claim? We are told that he has to teach the crowd a new life, but what life? That he has to abandon the aging Foscarina in order to create his masterpiece. What masterpiece? We are left in a constant state of expectation, and we know that we wait for something that will never be revealed to us.

We should be disappointed if we were to expect to find beauty and strength either in the development of the plot or in the psychology of the characters. As in all of D'Annunzio's novels, the value of *Il Fuoco* rests in the finished workmanship of certain parts and not in its totality. D'Annunzio is like a skillful architect who is capable of drawing a magnificent door, a perfect window, graceful arches, and stately columns, but who cannot put them together and create a harmonious whole. The importance of *Il Fuoco* centers around the author's analysis of his artistic experience, his theories of art, his description of the beauty of Venice and of Murano.

Justly celebrated is the study of a pack of greyhounds. But even these beautiful lines border on the grotesque when the author attempts to complicate the normal response of the beautiful and harmless greyhounds to the magnetism of Stelio Effrena. "Gathered together in a pack, they (the dogs) quivered around him who knew how to awaken in their blood the primitive instincts of pursuit and killing."[41] We do not know what the author means. We merely see in it a repetition of the theme of "destruction" which had already appeared in *Le Vergini delle Rocce.* Here, the hero longs for "a perverse but titanic ambition," a "magnificent slaughter." Swayed by his awakened primitive instincts, Claudio Cantelmo dreams of a bloody assault on a city: "to break into the conquered city, to leap over the heaps of corpses, to drive the sword into the flesh with an indefatigable gesture, to carry on the saddle half-clad women through the innumerable flames of a fire, while the blood rises to the stomachs of the horses, swift and *cruel* like leopards."[42]

The truth is that D'Annunzio has excluded the human soul from the domain of his art and for this reason he can render (and he does this admirably) only the inanimate world. For this very reason, however, his characters have no psychological depth and their life is narrowed down to pure sensuality. This fact engenders tediousness and weariness in the reader, who receives great promises of Life and ultimately discovers that Life is entirely reduced to a love affair. No novel glorifies the expectation of life more than *Il Fuoco;* yet, no novel exudes more slime than this, in the description of the relation between Stelio and Foscarina.

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[41] *Il Fuoco*, p. 329.

[42] Croce, *Letteratura Nuova Italia*, Vol. IV, p. 33.

We find as much absurdity in D'Annunzio's manner of describing the feelings of Stelio for such a great actress as in his calling horses "swift and *cruel* like leopards." "He felt regret for not having possessed the actress after a scenic triumph, still warm from the popular acclaim, covered with perspiration, panting and wan, with the vestiges of the tragic soul that had shouted and wept in her!"[43] Unexplained and unexplainable are his words: "I shall possess you in a vast orgy: I shall awaken in your experienced flesh all the divine and monstrous things which weigh on you, and the things accomplished and those which are about to be born within you, as in a sacred spring."[44] We read: "The voice of the elements, the woman sleeping in suffering, the imminence of fate, the immensity of the future, remembrances, presentiments, all these signs created in his spirit a state of unusual mystery in which the *unexpressed* work arose again full of light."[45] What work? Search the book and you will not find it. What one does find is the lust and cowardice of the effeminate Stelio, and the attempt to justify them in the name of a super-morality.

D'Annunzio reached the lowest point of decadence in *Forse che si, forse che no* (1910). Here incestuous love takes the place of passion, a change determined by the fact that the author has to continue to complicate his original theme if he wants to write another novel. Although full of aeroplanes and automobiles, the novel is the most rhetorical of all his works. It describes the love between Paolo Tarsis, a superman, and a perverted woman, Isabella Inghirami, who has a lover in her own brother, Aldo. She and her whole family are degenerate. Such is her father, such her sisters, one of whom, Varia, commits suicide because she, too, loves Paolo Tarsis.

Upon learning of the relationship between Isabella and Aldo, Paolo Tarsis calls her a vulgar prostitute. At this

[43] *Il Fuoco*, p. 189.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

insult, Isabella loses her mind, not without having stated, however, that she is not sorry for her relationship with Aldo, since love, like all divine powers, *is only perfect in trinity.* To this point of absurdity and blasphemy, rhetoric has led Gabriele D'Annunzio.

The war brought out his love for chivalrous adventures, but did not change the man as he lives in his art. His *Notturno* ("Nocturne"), 1921, not only continues, but accentuates, the aestheticism of his previous works. The author presents himself as he lies on a bed, temporarily blind and in great suffering. Memories come to him and he describes them with all the pomp and burdensome grandeur that is characteristic of him. He sees the war, air raids, a daring sea raid. From the war he wanders back to his childhood, to his mother. His inability to see whets in him the desire to contemplate all that life has to offer to our eyes. Heavy perfumes of flowers, glittering beauty of plumage, the carnage of the war, all this passes before us enveloped in the courtly prose of *Notturno* without awakening any other feeling except one of wonder at the perfect technique of the author. The fact is that the human note is completely absent from it.

If we compare this war book with the books that younger men have written inspired by the war, we shall be able to account for the adverse criticism that *Notturno* has received and shall also be able to notice the change that has taken place in the generation of today.

Critics have exaggerated the complexity of D'Annunzio's art and temperament. Both his temperament and his art become easily understood if we consider his fiction as a document showing the author's inability to break away from the formula of the days of his youth. The falseness of his life generated falsity in his art and it prevented his great talent from creating a genuine, lasting, and great work.

THE CONTEMPORARY NOVEL

5

THE CONTEMPORARY NOVEL

IN reviewing contemporary Italian fiction, one sees that three great figures of the previous generation cast their shadows over it, determining three distinct tendencies. The sane Naturalism of Giovanni Verga continues in, and is developed by, Grazia Deledda in her provincial novels about Sardinia; the Aestheticism of Gabriele D'Annunzio has passed into the novels of Guido da Verona; the Mysticism of Antonio Fogazzaro reflects itself in the fiction of Giovanni Boine, of Salvator Gotta, and, although transformed, in the works of G. A. Borgese and of many others who have expressed the spiritual problems of the new generation.

In the beginning of the century two generations found themselves face to face; one represented by Gabriele D'Annunzio and his followers, the other made up of a group of men who, although unknown to the reading public, carried in their hearts the vision of a nobler life and of a new art. These two groups represent the decline and ultimate disintegration of Naturalism, on the one hand, and the rise of Neo-Idealism, on the other.

Europe is witnessing today an idealistic revival. Such a reaction is natural in a generation that has passed through the war. No study of contemporary literature can neglect to take into account the World War. This tragic event hangs like an ominous cloud over contemporary literature. Some writers have willfully ignored it and in so doing have deprived their work of the elements of this powerful drama. Others have reflected in their fiction the effect that war produced in them either as a sense of moral apathy and dejection or in the form of a renewed faith in the spiritual destinies of men. This new faith, however, had already been felt long before the war in European intellectual life. The war only contributed to its development.

The new idealistic cycle of our own times marks the recurrence of a reaction against materialism which has parallels in history. We notice in fact that a civilization stressing the material side of life has always been followed by one in which the spiritual sides are emphasized. The Classic Age with its love for concreteness was followed by the Transcendentalism of the Middle Ages. The Renaissance was succeeded by sentimental and lofty Romanticism and in our own generation Naturalism by the Neo-Idealism of post-war Europe. It is also important to notice that each idealistic cycle has come in the wake of a great war. The Middle Ages followed the Barbarian Invasions; Romanticism, the Napoleonic Wars; contemporary Idealism, the World War.

The present idealistic reaction has in its essence an ethical basis in that it is directed towards a new conception of both life and progress. Life cannot be considered a blind tool of conquest, and man, as studied in art, cannot be looked upon as merely an expression of instinctive forces. The reaction is felt both in the political and social field and in art, although we as individuals may be blind to it, engulfed as we are in our absorbing interests and activities. The forces of history move unseen to the men who are a part of it. Contemporary literature, however, reflects a deep concern about the spiritual side of life which men feel again today. There are problems in it which never disturbed the minds of the characters of fiction forty years ago. The men who in the beginning of the present century were caught in the transition from Naturalism to Neo-Idealism looked unsympathetically at Naturalism. Yet in the universal economy, Naturalism (at its height and in its creative moments) and contemporary Idealism have been, and are, two vehicles through which Italy has achieved and is achieving its material and spiritual growth.

Although Naturalism declined during the World War, not every contemporary writer is a part of the new idealistic tendency. We shall, therefore, consider those who in the choice of their theme and in the trend of their thought either have linked themselves to the Naturalistic movement or have joined the ranks of Neo-Idealism by realizing the new problems of contemporary history. In the evaluation of their work, we have been led by their achievement in creative thought rather than in ornate form and imagery. Grazia Deledda, for instance, has our profound admiration, because, using naturalistic themes, she has struck a deep, human note in her novels. Guido da Verona and Luciano Zuccoli, prosaic continuators of Gabriele D'Annunzio, leave us indifferent, because of the lack of human content in their fiction. They use the word "human" in the sense of instinctive and barbaric, while we use it in the sense that that word has assumed after centuries of civilization.

Our whole sympathy is with the men of our own generation who have noticed the problems of modern life, the new possibilities of art, and have passionately experienced both life and art, fashioning a fiction that has all the characteristics of the spiritual and intellectual biography of the new generation.

II

A NEW EPISODE IN ITALIAN NATURALISM

THE writers that we have chosen to represent the continuation of Naturalism, Grazia Deledda, Clarice Tartùfari, and Giulio Bechi, disclose, both in the material they use and in their technique, definite characteristics distinguishing them from other contemporary writers. They are still interested in the world of instincts and human passions, assuming towards it that attitude of objectiveness that Naturalism insisted should be observed in the study of life.

From the tenets of that movement derives also the interest in provincial life evidenced by the study of Sardinia in the fiction of Deledda and of Bechi, and of the countryside of Orvieto in that of Tartùfari. While other writers of today, interested in the conflict of ideas rather than of emotions, are creating a style that in its suppleness reveals well the work of a dialectic mind, the continuators of Naturalism offer a compact and solid style that adheres perfectly to the earthly things in which they are interested. The latter is a more external and less abstract art than the former, and while remote from the present-day trend in Italian literature, is none the less great art, since through its vehicle Deledda created her great novels.

It is to be expected that, while in the reflective and introspective fiction of today description of nature and of external appearance of the characters is reduced to a minimum, in the naturalistic novel the descriptive elements should be greatly stressed. Deledda describes nature in its tangible aspects, because she lives it and she lives in it through all her senses. It is natural that she should try to render the very tangibility of the outer world. In such writers of today as Massimo Bontempelli and Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, it is difficult to picture to one's self both the background against which the characters are placed and their outward look. In the naturalistic writers, on the contrary, one sees the characters projected against a definite background that is rendered in all its minutest details. One cannot help feeling that the naturalistic novel, having appeared after the historical novel, applied to provincial life the same study and desire for documentation with which Manzoni prepared himself to write his novel about the seventeenth century. This interest naturally disappears in the introspective novel of Borgese and in the fantastïc work of Bontempelli, since the artist, working on the inner life of the character or following the flight of imagination, does not need any definite setting to express the play of ideas in which he is interested. In the naturalistic writers, however, not only do we have a definite countryside but the characters are outlined against it with such clear-cut contours as to create in the reader the impression of moving among people endowed with the tangibility of the human body.

GRAZIA DELEDDA

(Nuoro, Sardinia, 1875–)

Grazia Deledda is one of the outstanding writers of today. She made her entrance into the world of letters in the early Nineties, at a time when Giovanni Verga had raised the provincial novel to the height of great art. She took Verga's theme—the study of Sicily's country life—and transported it to Sardinia, her native island. Deledda loves the austere beauty of the rocky landscape, its silent and passionate inhabitants, its deeply rooted family traditions and ties, its picturesque customs that throw vivid spots of color in her novels. Sardinia forms, in fact, the background of almost all of Deledda's production. The foreground is occupied by the creations of her fancy, modeled after the people of the rocky island. Her characters are passionate, just as Verga's are born to toil in silence and to suffer in sacrifice. They carry in their hearts the precious burden of love, and in it they find the sum of their whole life.

Love is, in fact, the main theme in her work. In *Anime Oneste* ("Honest People"), 1896, her first novel, love appears suffused with an idyllic light, but, soon after, it assumes a new direction, as it is always directed toward a person who, because of social conditions, cannot satisfy it. Drama and tragedy derive from this situation, but they are not determined by the moralizing assumption that punishment follows a misplaced love. Love is, on the contrary, a redemption for these men and women of the solitary plains of Sardinia, as Deledda contends that they are blessed with life because they rely on instinct. In an interview with Alfredo Panzini, the gentle, grey-haired Deledda asked, "Why don't we entrust ourselves to instinct?" The sophisticated Panzini evaded the question.

The fact is that Deledda has remained magnificently naturalistic. She still has a profound faith in the forces of nature and a glowing enthusiasm for the richness and beauty of the earth. The different forces of life live in her spirit in a harmony that is never disturbed by ascetic aspirations or spiritual problems. She considers these aspirations and problems intellectual and arbitrary creations of man. Life, in its fatal unity, does not know how to separate nor isolate. Religious feeling and spirituality, however, live closely interwoven with human passions and they, too, are reduced to a form of instinct. Love, too, assumes in her a cosmic character, as the individual lives in the flux of nature; he is part of it, although rebellious to society and to any external force that may stand between him and nature.

This cosmic unity constitutes the raw material out of which Deledda fashions her novels. She sketches with a hand that is moved by the same passion for life that creates the hunger and thirst of the creatures of her fancy. But little psychological analysis accompanies the actions of her characters, yet we know them like familiar persons. They have passed before Deledda laden with the weight of life, precious and painful, and they now live in the immortality of her art.

Grazia Deledda's production is a perfect sublimation and projection of her own inner life. She has lived exclusively for her art, embodying in it her innermost thoughts, her dreams and moods. We can follow in her novels her growth from a young girl who dreamed life idyllic and pure to a woman who came to know the world and discovered in it the flame that burns in the heart of man.

Grazia Deledda attracted the attention of the literary public with the publication of *Anime Oneste* in 1896. It was a great honor for her to have Ruggero Bonghi, an illustrious scholar, write the preface to her novel. The book reconciled the old dean of Italian letters to modern literature, to which he was very hostile, having denounced it for its superficiality and even emptiness. Bonghi, who, perhaps, had not read Verga, stated that *Anime Oneste* was different from any other novel of the time. It is, on the contrary, a humble and somewhat uncertain continuation of Verga's novels. It has the background of Sardinia, and life is here rendered as it appeared to Deledda at the age of twenty-one, when she looked at the world through serene and limpid eyes, and saw in it only honest people. Such are the members of the Velena family, well-to-do landowners. Anna, an orphan cousin, goes to live with them, and the oldest son, Sebastiano, falls in love with her. The love between Anna and Sebastiano, between Pietro and Angela, one of the Velena girls, blooms naïvely in the novel like a gentle caress, a subdued song that awakens the soul more than the senses. "Angela was not the only one to wait for him (Pietro) in those beautiful summer evenings. All the girls gathered around him, and judging from the attention with which they listened to him, laughing and smiling, it was difficult to distinguish which one was his fiancée." [1] Thus is presented the love between Pietro and Angela. In a similar manner Sebastiano loves the sensitive and gentle Anna. "He found in Anna the ideal cherished in his heart and in his vigorous fancy, that is to say of a good, wise, and pure girl." [2] Nature joins in this idyllic picture of gentleness and serenity. "In the glory of the May sun, the meadows were joyous and radiant with flowers, and the tall green ears of the wheat waved under the caress of the wind." [3]

Thus beauty and art appeared in the dreams of young Deledda. Only from time to time a strange murmur and a chill wind pass over this idyl. Cesario Velena and his friend, Gonario Rosa, who are studying law in Rome, bring from the continent a disturbing element to humble and honest Sardinia. There follows a struggle, but the theme of the happiness enjoyed by honest people resumes and happily concludes the novel.

After four years, Deledda published *Il vecchio della montagna* ("The Old Man of the Mountain"), 1900. One feels that a gust of pessimism has passed over Deledda's spirit. She confesses in this book that "the soul of a woman is a pool in the depth of which slumber monsters that the slightest noise can awaken." [4] The ominous monster is the passion that burns in the heart of the shepherd, Melchiorre, and of his servant, Basilio, for the beautiful and wanton Paska.

The novel contains many references to criminology,[5] a scientific element introduced by both Capuana and Verga as a basis for art. The characters are shepherds and country folk with their picturesque customs. The young artist lingers over the slightest detail and etches out the figures of Paska, Melchiorre, of his blind father, Zio Pietro, and of young Basilio. Naturalistic is also the study of the rudimentary inner life of these characters that is narrowed down to blind passions and to elementary instincts.

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[1] *Anime Oneste*, p. 83.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 103.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 68.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 98.

[5] *Il vecchio della montagna*, p. 43, 74, 78.

The lyric temperament of Deledda, however, was not made for the objectiveness of Naturalism, and this creates a contrast between the primitive characters that she portrays and the poetical feelings that she attributes to them. Basilio, the young servant, becomes at times grotesquely poetical. "He was seized by a violent desire to ride furiously through the plains, sending mad cries to the boundless distances of the horizon tinged with spring hues." [6]

Deledda's return to Naturalism was not in vain. Through it, she learned how to give to her characters a greater concreteness than that possessed by the characters in *Anime Oneste*.

A noteworthy progress in the development of her art was realized in *Dopo il divorzio* ("After the Divorce"), 1902. The disturbing contrast between her lyric temperament and the primitiveness of the content is wiped out by the poignant grief of the innocent Costantino Ledda, who is sentenced to twenty-seven years' imprisonment for homicide. His tragedy transforms the passion of the preceding novel into a drama—a drama written with the drops of blood that fall from the heart of the innocent victim, who has the soul of a child, of a poet, and of a mystic.

In no novel has Deledda poured out her sympathy over the sufferings of a character as she has done here. Dealing with Melchiorre Carta, she seemed disturbed by the presence of his passion. It was, in fact, passion for itself. But here, passion becomes pure love surrounded by a halo of unspeakable sorrow. "The more time passed, the more he felt he loved her [his wife, Giovanna]. She was his distant village, his family, his liberty, his life. Everything centered in her: hope, faith, strength, serenity, the joy of living, his very soul." [7] Thus Costantino loved while pining away in the grim prison of Naples.

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[6] *Il vecchio della montagna,* p. 74.

Costantino Ledda is the most lyric and sublime of Deledda's characters. He is a dreamer who loses everything: his love, his child, his liberty, but never loses faith. His faith is like the motif of a song in this novel. He has against him the inflexible law of necessity. Giovanna is young and beautiful and may marry again. Yet he continues to hope and, though his body is emaciated and weak, his soul is made strong by his faith. When, after many years, he goes home and finds Giovanna married to a rich shepherd, he acts like an automaton in obeying the bidding of nature and in embracing her. The novel is like a great voice that proclaims the irresistible power of nature.

Nature is a part of the drama of these human beings that struggle, suffer, hate, and love. The same mysterious urge that dulls Giovanna's love, kills her child, and drowns the moans of poor Costantino, makes the seasons revolve blindly year after year. The same sun warms the poor, quivering body of Costantino in the courtyard of the prison and fills the universe with a new life reminding Giovanna of her youth. The earth spreads its perfumes, its beauty, its light; it wounds the mountains with its storms while men plod along the endless path of life. Deledda has a sort of awe before its power and only notices the sorrow and joy, the destruction and the beauty that it spreads in the lives of men, in the mountains and plains.

This objectiveness which permeates the pages of *Dopo il divorzio* was determined by Deledda's attitude toward life. She was both struck and charmed by the unfeeling and passive character of nature. Costantino and Giovanna reflect in their lives the drama of Deledda, who had not yet found a solution for the conflicting thoughts that surged in her.

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[7] *Dopo il divorzio*, p. 117.

In *Cenere* ("Ashes"), 1903, a passionate cry rises: What is life? Deledda is on an ardent quest, and the query rises like a lonely voice above the sufferings of the characters. The answer is a tragic one: Life is but ashes. It is precisely what young Anania discovers before the body of his suicide mother.

Most of the characters crowded in this novel bear the stigmata of Deledda's mood, as they, too, are bent on a quest of their own. Olì and Anania meet in the silence of the fields and fall in love, bringing into the world a child that, with the name, inherits the dreamy temperament of his father and the impetuous character of his mother. Anania, the father, has the imagination of a poet. He is tall and handsome and in his eyes there flickers the shadowy light of the dreams that bewitched Olì. Love is a part of the quest of life for them.

Young Anania enters the world as an outsider and an outcast. As time passes his knowledge of life is constantly embittered by grief. His mother's love, his childhood, his love for Margherita Carboni, his protector's daughter, everything which is his life, is doomed to sorrow. While in college at Cagliari, Anania tells himself that life is movement and action, and he plunges into his work with the same frenzy with which he gives himself to sorrow and love. But the same emptiness presses all around him. He does not know where his mother is; he asks himself whether he has the right to offer his love to Margherita; his future is gloomy. Anania becomes at this point the center of the novel. His uncertainty reduces itself into the query: What is Life? In vain he goes to Rome, and in vain his friend Daga invites him to accept life with a cynical smile. Anania's sadness is not helped by it, and he lives indifferently among the boisterous university students and remains untouched before the sensual Roman spring. He returns to Sardinia, finds his mother, and her presence chills and kills his love for Margherita. Everything crumbles around him. Before the corpse of his mother, who has committed suicide so that Anania may marry the wealthy girl, the query comes again: What is Life? Anania finds the answer in a little sack that his mother had given him when a child and that he carried around his neck. He opens it and sees that it contains only ashes.

Deledda finds a new answer to the query in *Sino al confine* ("At the Border of Life and Death"), 1910. Life is serenity; it is accepting the night that dies and the day that is born anew; it is entrusting ourselves to the warmth of living things. Gavina, a young girl of the well-to-do Sulis family, has grown up in the belief that pleasure is sin. This belief creates in her a morbid curiosity that makes her see coarseness and vulgarity all around her. She watches a group of men going to hunt, and, shuddering, she imagines their obscene conversation. She avoids the main street of the town, where elegant army-officers and young students look admiringly at her fresh beauty. She shrinks from them and shuts herself in a tormented isolation, in which she considers sinful every expression of her emotional life. In this state she falls in love with Priamo, a youth destined to the priesthood by his poor family. A young physician, Francesco Fais, falls in love with her, and she passively accepts his proposal of marriage. They go to Rome and she passes indifferently through everything. Her sadness becomes almost a frenzy when she hears that Priamo has killed himself in a sanctuary on a lonely mountain top. In the crisis that follows, slowly truth and life show her their serene countenance. Gavina is saved. She is reconciled with life that stands luminous and unveiled before her.

In this novel we find two distinct groups of characters representing two conceptions of life—one based on repression, the other on freedom; the one plunging the soul of man into gloom, the other filling it with joyousness and spontaneity.

Individuals with such contrasting points of view are to be found in every walk of life. A priest, Felix, is presented with a saintly and placid face, while another, Bellia, "dark and sad, with down-cast eyes, seemed a specter."[8] Gavina is always sad and tormented; Francesco is always happy and joyous. "Ultimately he was a primitive. He did not lose himself in vain questions, and he loved life with joyousness, merely because it was life."[9] The same happiness we find in Zio Soringhe, an extemporaneous poet, poor and old, whose wrinkled face wore a perpetual smile because he accepted life with the philosophy of the people.

Surrounded by these persons, Gavina is unable to understand herself, and she tortures herself with ascetic visions. Deledda, who appears to play the rôle of a mentor to her, seems to warn: Do not be afraid; it is Life; follow it with sincerity and candor. We notice, in fact, that Gavina is constantly placed in a situation in which she passes by happiness, but is unable to seize it because of her fears and scruples. One day, Gavina and Francesco are sitting side by side in the solitude of the fields. Francesco takes her hand and kisses it. "The sky was of an intense azure and the air was transparent as in a spring afternoon. By closing their eyes, the two young people could have believed themselves to be at the shore of the sea and could have passed a happy hour. But Gavina thought of something else and withdrew her hand."[10] Francesco, on another occasion, invites Gavina to take a walk in the moonlight, but she prefers to sit down under an oak tree, tormenting herself with thoughts of her sentimental relation with Priamo. The day of the wedding comes. "Towards evening it began to snow, but on the nuptial day the sky cleared and the mountains and the valley seemed covered with a sparkling wedding gown."[11] But Gavina cannot see this pure beauty and is gloomy and unhappy.

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[8] *Sino al confine*, p. 156.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 154

It is a long struggle for Gavina to conquer the influences that have separated her from life. Before the cold face of death, she realizes the joy of being alive, and wrests herself from fear and unhappiness. "Little by little, terror and anguish of death were followed by a sentiment that was unknown to her: the joy of living. Alive! Alive! She was alive!" [12]

This is the final statement of Deledda's underlying philosophy. From the publication of *Sino al confine* her work has mainly expressed her faith in the unity and unerring character of instincts. In this novel she shows the process through which she reaches that faith. In her later stories she further elaborates this thought by showing the tragic effects of thwarting instinct. From this subsequent mood is derived *Marianna Sirca*, 1915. Deledda's art has here become more conscious of itself, and, therefore, more concentrated and restrained. Her characters move in the hieratic fashion of the Sardinian people, solemn and silent. They have the concreteness of statuary and not the elusiveness of a colorful shadow. Here is a servant of Marianna Sirca: "They all looked outside towards the gigantic and dark figure of the servant that advanced rigidly as if made of wood." [13] The servant asks Marianna to put salt on the blood-pudding that he has cut. "It seemed that they were performing a rite, the servant rigid, with his black, square beard like that of an Egyptian priest, she pale and exquisite in her bodice red like the flower of the pomegranate." [14] Her figures afford in this novel a stupendous example of a prose that approaches sculpture as far as words can replace the solidity of marble or bronze.

No longer are delicate colors diffused in her scenes of nature; no longer are poetic images evoked by a cloud or by snow; nature is now rendered in all its concreteness. We read: "Large drops of rain, hard and brilliant like pearls, began to fall with violence."[15] And again: "The rain finally broke forth, raised by the wind like a veil woven with threads of steel. It writhed, falling furiously on the trees and on the underbrush which, in turn, writhed with anguish."[16]

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[12] *Sino al confine*, p. 324.

[13] *Marianna Sirca*, p. 13.

[14] *Ibid.* p. 17.

Likewise, she strikes a deeper vein in the humanity of her characters and she gains in depth what she loses in color. The main figure is Marianna Sirca. Tall, beautiful, silent, moving with a hieratic composure, she is tied to her virtue and to her family traditions. As a child she went to live with a melancholy uncle, a priest, so that she might be his heiress. She lived to the age of thirty without a will of her own, without love, as if in a slumber and in a daze. "You were a wall of ice, Marianna," says her cousin, Sebastiano, to her. "You were like a queen, before whom even her brothers stood in awe."[17] In a lonely farm where she went upon the death of her uncle, she met Simone, a bandit, and her life was transformed. He became for her the symbol of liberty. "Everything is good, provided we do not lose our liberty,"[18] had remarked the fugitive Simone, who was constantly struggling against the laws of man and the fury of nature. Imbued with this new sense of liberty, Marianna felt the leaden cloak that had weighed down her childhood and youth fall from her shoulders. She was awakened to life through him. She was "bent over him as if on the waters of a fountain which she tried in vain to reach with her thirsting lips."[19]

Her whole family conspires to stifle her love. Her father conceals his grief in a reproachful silence. Sebastiano, a cousin, feels that he has to defend the honor of their family by preventing Marianna from marrying the bandit. Fidela, an old servant, joins them and stands between the two lovers with her inflexible code of honor and virtue. "Fidela was turning the spit; they saw her and felt her between them; she was inflexible reality." [20]

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[15] *Marianna Sirca*, p. 121.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Simone is killed by Sebastiano and Marianna resumes her passive and sad existence. A wealthy landowner asks for her hand. "She welcomed him with a still and serious countenance, but when it was a question of giving him a final answer, she looked into his eyes and a sudden shudder seemed to shake her from her inner death. She said 'yes' because the eyes of her wooer resembled those of Simone." [21] They are the closing words of the novel.

In *La Madre* ("The Mother"), 1920, we are no longer confronted by the primitive people of the preceding novels. We meet Paulo, a young priest who has lived for seven years in the silence of a small mountain village attending to his parish. Paulo, however, is not considered in any of his intellectual attributes. Deledda digs into this character till she finds the primitive being that is dormant in him. "The first year of their residence in the town, he spoke of going away, of returning to the world. Then, he had fallen into a kind of slumber, in the shadow of the cliffs, in the rustle of the leaves." [22] He, too, was waiting to be awakened. He had kept in subjection the strong passionate nature of his ancestors, people of the soil, but that subjection was an offense against life. "He was a man of strong instincts, like his forefathers, and he suffered because he could not abandon himself to instincts." [23] For him, too, as for the characters of this period, the shackles were broken by his meeting Agnese, a young woman who lived in the solitude of her ancestral home. Indeed, his love for Agnese gave him a glimpse of the infinite. "No, it was not his flesh that cried out for life; it was his soul that was imprisoned in the flesh and wanted to be freed." [24] In no novel is the feeling of the oneness of love and life more evident than in *La Madre.* Although mainly an instinctive being, Paulo affords a more complex psychology than other characters of the preceding novels. He tries to stifle his love, but he discovers that all his arguments are empty sophisms. The drama of the young priest is not presented in an abstract analysis but is diffused in every act, in every word, in every posture of Paulo. A tragic struggle is depicted as he debates whether to flee with the girl or to remain chained to his duty. It was a stormy night and the wind raged like the passion in Paulo's heart. "As if lost, he turned back [from the young woman's house], fell on his knees before the door of the church, and leaned his forehead on it, moaning, 'My God, help me.' He felt the black wings of his cloak beat on his shoulders; and for a few moments he remained there in that posture, like a bird of prey nailed alive to the door." [25] There is more analysis concentrated in that etching than a flood of adjectives could convey. It is a graphic, tangible, ominous rendering of human anguish.

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[20] *Marianna Sirca*, p. 180.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

[22] *La Madre*, p. 30.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

While Agnese is barely sketched, the mother occupies the foreground of the novel with Paulo. His struggle is her struggle, and it makes her an Aeschylean figure worthy of immortality. Although, at first, she speaks to her son of temptation and duty, trying to separate him from Agnese, finally her mother's heart softens to pity for him, and she cries to God, tortured by the grief of being constrained to curse a love that she knows is the light of her son's life. She cries out, "'Why, O Lord, why?' She did not dare finish the query, but the query was deep in her heart like a stone in the depth of a well." [26] Paulo's tragedy becomes hers, and she dies of a broken heart in church while her son is saying mass. "He understood that she had died of the same sorrow, of the same terror that he had been able to conquer. He clenched his teeth in order not to shout. Over the confused crowd of people, his eyes met Agnese's." [27]

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[24] *La Madre*, p. 77.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Deledda received the Nobel prize for this novel. In fact, it marks the highest point of development in the production of the Sardinian writer. She has reduced the number of her characters to three: the mother, Paulo, and Agnese, and all the light is focused on them. The language partakes of the artist's passion and it glows with her inward flame, having lost the diffused, but external character of the prose of the early novels.

Deledda later published *Il secreto dell'uomo solitario* ("The Secret of the Solitary Man"), 1921, and *Il Dio dei viventi* ("The God of the Living"), 1922. In the former Deledda has felt the introspective tendency of the writers of the younger generation and this has determined a return to the lyricism of the early years of her career. The novel presents Cristiano living in a lonely plain and guarding a secret that is revealed in the last pages of the book. He falls in love with Savina, a young and beautiful woman who is married to a demented man. Cristiano's secret, his marriage to a wealthy woman older than he, stands between him and Savina. It is one of the few novels by her that do not deal with Sardinia. The characters are lacking in solidity just as their emotions do not possess the vehemence that leads to drama.

A deeply moral tone permeates the pages of *Il Dio dei viventi*, but without creating the magnificent figures we have admired in other novels. The characters that are crowded in this work, from the unscrupulous Zebedeo to his visionary wife, are without that inward force that has given life to Deledda's other characters. It is nothing but cold moralizing, enlivened here and there by a touch of humor. In fact, *Il Dio dei viventi* is a kind of parable that shows how Zebedeo, who has destroyed his brother's will so that his own son, Bellia, may inherit the money, is punished until he makes amends for his dishonesty.

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[27] *La Madre*, p. 234.

Continuing to write with an amazing fervor, Deledda has published a novel in 1928, *Annalena Bilsini*, and another in 1929, *Il vecchio e i fanciulli* ("Old Age and Youth"). *Annalena Bilsini* has many points of similarity with Verga's *I Malavoglia*. The central figure of the book, Annalena Bilsini, has taken the place of Paron Ntoni, to be sure, but they both are given the task of toiling hard in order to keep their families united and to give them wealth and strength. In Deledda's work there also appears the black sheep of the family who, like Verga's young Ntoni, goes to take his military service and brings back the restlessness of the continent. Both Annalena Bilsini and old Paron Ntoni, after many hardships, succeed in realizing their modest dream.

The dramatization of their success, however, gives us the measure of the temperament of the master, Verga, and of his disciple, Deledda. To Verga (and in this he is a true naturalist) life offers so much pathos that it needs no embellishment. He presents Paron Ntoni with a directness and with such subdued tones as to make one feel that he has been bodily transported from life into art. His attributes are close to those of the average man in an amazing degree and his drama is the drama of the average individual. Deledda, on the contrary, brings out the emotional life of Annalena Bilsini, a true daughter of the Sardinian Mountains. She is a beautiful and still young widow who finds in her youth and beauty a hindrance to her task of bringing success to her family. For Deledda, the drama of success is of secondary importance compared with the dramatization of the emotional life of the heroine and of all her characters.

Verga and Deledda, representing two generations, have a different approach to life. We point out this fact merely to show that the severe, restrained, unimpassioned Naturalism of Verga has given place, with Grazia Deledda, to a new type of art, warm, passionate, full of poetry and imagination.

Annalena Bilsini stands next to Marianna Sirca in the glow with which the writer has enveloped her. However, in this new novel, Deledda has lost that supreme faith in instinct that made her create the passionate and love-sick Marianna Sirca. In Annalena Bilsini, the love motif has a great part but all her characters are conscious of its evil nature. "Love, yes," sighed Isabella, "it is a beautiful trap, all gold outside, with Death within."[28] It seems that Deledda's Naturalism has been disturbed by religious feelings which, although they circulate in the book, do not succeed in asserting themselves. As it is, *Annalena Bilsini* is a great novel and has marvelous pages in which Deledda describes nature or presents picturesque and human figures. Uncle Dionisio is one of these. He is an old man the description of whose death from a paralytic stroke allows us to admire Deledda's art at its best.

In *Il vecchio e i fanciulli*, love is still the fundamental theme, but it is a more disturbing and tragic factor than in the preceding book. Deledda embodies her changed outlook on instinct and love in an overgrown boy, Luca, who runs away from home and goes to the fold of an old and well-to-do shepherd, Ulpiano Melis. From the time of Luca's arrival, everything seems to become disorderly both in the fold and at the home of old Ulpiano. The latter has a granddaughter, Francesca, who "seemed truly born to be a male; with a large head, a deep voice, hair on her upper lip; her body was strong although she was of small stature, slightly bow-legged through horseback riding."[29] There arise between Francesca and Luca, the servant, feelings which are a strange mixture of hostility, hatred, and morbid interest in each other. The climax is reached when the two yield to their love, and tragedy darkens the hitherto peaceful life of Ulpiano Melis.

[28] *Annalena Bilsini*, p. 185.

[29] *Il vecchio e i fanciulli*, p. 17.

The tone of the novel is somewhat strained. It reminds one of the too lyrical feelings that young Deledda attributed, a quarter of a century ago, to Basilio in *Il Vecchio della montagna.* One remembers here the appearance of the characters rather than their drama.

Nevertheless, Deledda is a great literary figure and she has contributed an original, colorful, and deeply human chapter to contemporary Italian fiction.

MINOR WRITERS

CLARICE TARTÙFARI

(Rome, 1868–)

After Deledda, Clarice Tartùfari is the most significant writer among the women who have taken to writing. She has a sane and constructive point of view about life and tries to shelter it from the introspective and searching analysis of the new generation. This motif which characterizes very clearly her art and her personality has become the subject of a significant novel, *La rete d'acciaio* ("The Net of Steel"), 1919, in which she contrasts the tormented modern spirit of Europe with the American point of view about life. The novel, which centers about love, shows how in America the acceptance of this natural feeling without the false veils of European conventions allows one to realize a life of happiness.

The interesting part of Tartùfari's works is her concern over problems that have a direct bearing on life, which she solves according to a moral code based on a sort of religious sense of human responsibility. She has developed this point of view in another novel, *Il dio nero* ("The Black God"), 1921, in which against the background of the World War she presents the clash between the god Moloch, embodiment of evil, and the other God who abides in the intimacy of our conscience. There is nothing intellectual in this, nor in her other writings, in which we find a plain philosophy based on a warm sentiment of life. In this characteristic she is in harmony with Grazia Deledda.

The naturalistic origin of her art is also evidenced by the country atmosphere, which forms the background of her first two novels: *Il miracolo* ("The Miracle"), 1909, and *Eterne leggi* ("Eternal Laws"), 1911. Orvieto's beautiful Gothic cathedral looms serene in the former, and the country around Pesaro with its silent and toiling peasants in the latter.

In *Eterni leggi* she studies the fatal law that governs the growth and decline of a family, although one never feels the weight of this thesis in it. The author presents to us four generations of the Almerici family, which towards the middle of the last century begins to acquire wealth and power. With wealth comes education and refinement, until in modern times its refinement degenerates into effeminacy. Although the first generation is barely sketched, grandfather Lavello, who lived in the days of Garibaldi, Costanzo, his son, and the neurotic Ascanio, the grandson, are presented with an exquisite art that reminds one of that of Verga.

Tartùfari does not possess the tragic and concentrated greatness of the author of *I Malavoglia*, but she is endowed with a sympathetic and warm soul that enables her to humanize any abstract problem. As such, she is an important literary figure of today.

The concern over moral and religious themes which characterizes the works of the new generation has also appeared, with a greater force than in *Il miracolo*, in one of her latest novels, *Il mare e la vela* ("The Sea and the Sail"), 1924. On the whole, however, she has remained faithful to the artistic ideals of Naturalism.

La nave degli eroi ("The Ship of the Heroes"), 1927, proves the truth of this statement better than any of the preceding books. It is a very significant novel in that it shows the author at her best in creating characters who, in the struggle of instinct, reach out desperately towards a higher life. When, however, we try to understand in what this aspiration actually consists we are disappointed, as no faith, no heroism (unless we consider as such the passive resignation of a blind youth) appear in the book. Giorgio, who has lost his sight in the World War, has, it is true, a dream in which he sees "men of unusual structure, erect, suffering chosen souls, predestined to the divine punishment of navigating in order to leave a wake." [30]

This dream, which is related in the last pages of the book, may be the subject of a future novel but in this one it fails to fulfill the promises made by the author in the title.

The story leads us to the tempestuous Romagna of pre-war days and we witness the intrigues of the clericals and socialists. Most of the characters are opportunists and plotters who crush those before whose eyes shines the light of idealism. We are told of the struggle of a young girl, Donata Dorgogliosi, who, while in love with a young dreamer, Giorgio, yields to a brutal and passionate man, Mario Alidossi, a sort of vagabond for whom life is instinct and violence.

Tartùfari succeeds best in her analysis of the play of instinct. Instinct lends a dreamy character to the youth of Donata, a frail and sensitive being, sadly neglected by her father, a politician, and by her mother, an erratic anarchist. Instinct casts a veil of melancholy over the loveless existence of Aunt Giulietta. It puts a tender and joyous note in the adolescence of Emma, Donata's sister. It speaks of violence in the deeds of Marco Alidossi and in the tragic clashes between the opposing factions of Romagna.

The presence of instinct prevents the author from offering what we might term the drama of ideas. The latter requires a writer so highly intellectual as to be able to consciously ignore the drama of the senses. Tartùfari, on the contrary, fashions a heroine for whom love is her whole existence. Donata has met young Marco: "Donata, who saw everything through a mist, went with the rigidity of a somnambulist to lock herself in her room. That young man meant nothing to her, it meant nothing to her that he was tall and that his teeth shone when he spoke. She could not even explain to herself the reason of her exultation. Two years before, while she was casually walking along a country path, a gust of wind had suddenly enveloped her, bringing to her a presentiment of so many unknown things, perfumes of gardens never seen, songs of voices never heard, and a sudden happiness had come over her, fresh and light as an April shower."[31] This instinctive character of the heroine baffles the efforts of the author in proving that the man Donata really loved was Giorgio and not the man to whom she had yielded.

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[30] *La nave degli eroi*, p. 400.

Tartùfari's characters are wholly creatures of instinct and their drama centers in that predominant trait. As in Deledda, instinct makes them passive and sublime; it is their force and their perdition. If the heroes promised by the title do not appear, there pass before us human beings tortured in the very flesh by the power of passion and of love. As the story develops, the lure of instinct gives place to a stirring drama in which life is envisaged as eternal and blindly changing, an endless road on which man walks in constant need of a stern and silent companion, courage.

Both Deledda and Tartùfari have admirably succeeded in the treatment of the passion theme. They have idealized passion, they have infused sentiment into it and, by so doing, they have afforded a wide range of emotions that makes their fiction distinct from that of other writers who only express in their works a crude and elementary realism.

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[31] *La nave degli eroi*, p. 47.

GIULIO BECHI

(Florence, 1870–1917)

To the same group belongs Giulio Bechi, whose novels depict the life in the province, made colorful by picturesque and primitive customs. He became famous with a series of sketches on Sardinian life under the title of *Caccia grossa* ("Big Game"), 1899, which he wrote while on the island as an officer commanding an expedition against the bandits. He described the conditions of the island as he saw them. His directness and bluntness cost him several unpleasant experiences with his superiors and even duels with persons who took offense at the book.

Bechi's art, however, offers more than picturesque descriptions. It has a deep philosophical and ethical content, which he has expressed in a complex novel, *I seminatori* ("The Sowers"), 1913. Bechi is a humanitarian and an idealist and he voices in this book his faith in progress, which, according to him, a few individuals create and spread among the masses. The sower in the novel is Lao, a patriot, who, surrounded by the indifference of his countrymen and even misunderstood in the intimacy of his home, sacrifices himself for his country and for the regeneration of his people.

The Libyan war serves as a background to the novel, together with a study of the social conditions in Italy at the time when Nationalism fought its first battles against Socialism. The interest of the author in the historical and social setting is paramount and even the political leaders of the time, Crispi and Giolitti, appear in it under fictitious names.

The war, on which Lao has looked in a spirit of national vindication, is declared. Lao goes only to find death on the battlefield. The ominous and significant grandeur of the war occupies the foreground of the novel and mere individuals are forgotten. The keynote of the book is the sense of the unimportance of the individual before the greatness of historical events. Lao feels his own nullity and he accepts it, thus creating a deeply human drama in the story. Lao is a hero, not only because he is a sower and because he dies in battle, but he is a greater and more modern hero because his exploit partakes of the heroism of modern men, whose deeds are above those of the sword and whose agonies are above the pain of the flesh.

The Libyan war appears also in another book of Bechi's, *Racconti del bivacco* ("Stories around the Campfire"), 1915. It is a collection of stories that a group of officers relate at night during the campaign as they sit around the campfire. Unlike *I seminatori*, this book is without philosophical purpose, yet it shows Bechi at his best. Through all the vicissitudes here related, some amusing and others pathetic, one senses and admires the soldier in his human attributes.

Bechi has left a wake of sympathy and admiration after him. The sentiments and ideals expressed in his books were a part of his own life, and he fashioned his heroes out of his genuine aspiration towards the greatness of Italy, just as he followed the example of his most beloved character, Lao, in offering his life for an ideal.

III

THE FOLLOWERS OF GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

THE imitators of Gabriele D'Annunzio afforded a suitable kind of fiction to a vast reading public made up of young students, ladies of questionable reputation and aesthetes of all descriptions. To this motley crowd, decadent and hungry for excitement, the imitators of the author of *Il piacere* gave a fiction coarse, voluminous, shining with a gloss that hides spiritual vacuity. Such is, on the whole, the production of Guido da Verona, Luciano Zuccoli, and many others who sought inspiration in D'Annunzio's ideals of life and art.

As is the case with all imitators, they popularized the art of their model. No product is more refractory to popularization than D'Annunzio's, the writer of aristocratic circles, in whom even the commonplace is raised to a lofty plane. Popularization has had the effect of bringing to light the grossness hidden under the aesthetic draperies of the master. In the imitators, the element of vulgarity and the baroque-like veils become separated, each unduly magnified to the point of bordering on the grotesque. If we imagine a profligate woman who speaks the words of a vestal, or a coarse and vulgar man who aspires to rhythmic gestures and embellishes his speech with baroque imagery, we shall have an idea of the atmosphere of this fiction. It is a colorful but soulless product in which man is reduced to playing the rôle of a mannikin. There moves in it a stereotyped crowd of characters who are featureless and anonymous because they lack human attributes. Their deeds, heralded as exploits, are but vain gestures of shadowy figures.

The writers of this fiction are most elegant and effeminate, gentlemen whom we can picture sitting in the luxurious cafés of a large city, silent and blasé, eyeing women through their monocles. Their productivity reached its height in post-war Italy, and is known as *Letteratura d'armistizio* ("Armistice Literature"). It developed as one manifestation of the mad rush for pleasure that characterized Europe immediately after the war. It is also referred to as *Letteratura Milanese* ("Milanese Literature") from the city of Milan, where it especially thrived and where most of it was published.

GUIDO DA VERONA

(SALICETO PANARO, MODENA, 1881–)

Guido da Verona affords in his novels a great promise of life which he stifles in the commonplaces of erotic adventures. His writings can be reduced to the usual triangle of husband, wife, and lover, embellished by the exotic atmosphere of distant lands, international trains, and luxurious hotels. A great passion seizes the lovers, who, to appease this, brush aside all obstacles.

After removing the flimsy and sparkling haze of exoticism and after the echoing of sophistry has subsided, we see, in all their innate weakness, beings who are trying to persuade themselves and us that their passion is sublime and divine and that a new moral code must be accepted by them.

There is no growth nor development in da Verona's fiction. Beginning and end are known before we open them. Passion bursts with the violence of a fire, as is the case with all artificial writers, and the climax inevitably finds the lovers defying conventions in the usual trite fashion.

In his first two novels, *Immortaliamo la vita* ("The Immortality of Life"), 1904, and *L'Amore che torna* ("Love's Return"), 1910, da Verona asks himself what life is. The answer is a narrow and artificial one: life is passion. It is, at least, for Jacopo Prassitele and for Germano Guelfi di Materdomini, the heroes of these two novels. But Jacopo Prassitele is not strong enough to realize his dream of passion, while Germano Guelfi di Materdomini, the decadent nobleman of *L'Amore che torna*, after an ardent adventure in Paris with Elena, returns passively to marry Edoarda, a sensitive and gentle girl. The author devotes himself to describing in his usual overdrawn manner Germano and Elena and in exalting in vague terms their happiness. Yet the real figure in the novel is the sad and gentle Edoarda, who suffers and loves in a silence that gives to the novel its only human note.

In *La vita comincia domani* ("Life Begins Tomorrow"), 1912, da Verona gives a philosophical basis to passion. Andrea Ferento, a celebrated physician, is the hero. He does not know the uncertainty and wavering of the earlier characters. He is a perfect type of superman, endowed with the absolute and categorical will to conquer, but for these very traits is less a man. He falls in love with Novella, Giorgio Fieschi's young and beautiful wife. A problem arises: Shall Andrea curb his passion, respecting his friendship for Georgio, shall he feel compassion for the latter, who is dying of an incurable disease, or has he the right to suppress him?

This situation creates two conflicts for Andrea Ferento; one against man who wants to punish him, another against himself, his conscience, and Novella. The problem is solved through the presentation of a new code of ethics, the fallacy of which undermines the very basis of the novel. "Our conscience," reasons Andrea to Novella, "is an involuntary sense of justice, but, more often, it is the fear of our soul before happiness." [1] Now, if the human conscience is anything at all, it may be fear of our soul before grief, but never before happiness. "God?" continues Ferento in paving his way for the suppression of Giorgio, "God? A word as empty as a ravine."[2] "The law? The law has been made by men like myself. . . . I am stronger and I shall break it."[3]

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[1] *La vita comincia domani*, p. 88.

Thereupon he kills Giorgio, and Novella becomes his. But one thought torments him: Will Novella love him even when she learns of his crime? If she really loves him, her love will rise above the act. Then life will really begin for them. Novella's love stands the test, and she exclaims, "Everything can happen except that I cease to love you."[4] This is a contamination of death and an insult to the human conscience.

In his later novels da Verona used this extraordinary code to unravel situations brought about by violent passions that clash against all moral laws. The fundamental motif of *La vita comincia domani* becomes more complicated, but the problem remains basically the same.

Such is the case of *Mimì Bluette, fiore del mio giardino* ("Mimì Bluette, Flower of My Garden"), 1916. This novel relates the love of a beautiful dancer, Mimì Bluette, for an unknown individual whom she meets at the Bar de la Grande Rouquine in Paris. Mimì has been taken to the French capital by a speculator and has become the mistress of an influential and wealthy politician. The mysterious individual whom she loves, knowing the situation, disappears and goes to Morocco as a soldier. Mimì succeeds in learning that her lover is in Africa and she follows him there only to discover that he has met with death in an encounter between French troops and rebels. She returns to Paris, dances for the last time the "Dance of the Sun," in which she puts all the light and fervor of African life, and then commits suicide.

There are gorgeous pages in which da Verona displays his skill in describing the primitive landscape of Africa, but the lyric quality of the novel is inconsistent with the mediocrity of the characters, and consequently reduces itself to a useless display of beautiful words.

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[2] *La vita comincia domani*, p. 92.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 364.

The very same situation and atmosphere of *La vita comincia domani* returns in *Yvelise*, 1923. Here, too, Enzo is married to a woman who is lying at death's door. He falls in love with his sister-in-law, young and beautiful Yvelise, whom he marries to his business associate, Till. The same problem arises: Must they respect that life that is about to flicker out, or must they yield to their love? Enzo must decide. A physician asks him whether he wants an operation, which in all likelihood would be fatal to Marta. The husband gives his consent, believing that the operation will remove the obstacle that stands between him and Yvelise. In fact, Marta dies and the two, while watching the dead, contaminate with the fulfillment of their desire the sacred hush that death spreads in its passing.

In one of his latest novels, *L'Inferno degli uomini vivi* ("The Hell of Living Men"), 1926, da Verona presents man in all his primitive instincts brought into play by an adventurous journey into Antarctica. The background of the novel is formed by the eternal snows, the blinding and raging storms of this desolate land, where a caravan of adventurers goes in search of gold. Gerardo and Ivana, two lovers, are among them. Their life is a struggle between man and nature, between man and beasts, between man and man, as to who shall survive, as to who is going to feed on the last ration of bread, and enjoy the favors of the woman.

Primitiveness is found in all of the characters, in the form both of cruelty and of sensuality. Ivana is thus presented: "Her mouth was so passionate that, had she been a nun, she would have had to cover it." [5] Love between her and Gerardo comes in the usual unmotivated manner. "From that day, from that very moment, he could not look at her without growing pale."[6] Ivana and Gerardo survive the journey to Antarctica, and they are about to reach civilization when they fall exhausted. There passes Gerardo's foster-father, Miguel, who had been betrayed by his wife because of her love for Gerardo. He, too, was on the same perilous journey, in the same storms and wild wastes, in search of gold. He avenges himself by leaving the two lovers in the solitude of the snow, a sure prey to a lingering death. Miguel's men, at his order, with their whips prevent the two from joining them. "Motionless, with staring eyes, the two, doomed to die, saw the caravan of Miguel disappear into the infinite night."[7]

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[5] *L'Inferno degli uomini vivi*, p. 10.

Cléo robes et manteaux, published the same year as *L'inferno degli uomini vivi*, reveals in a sad manner the vacuity previously hidden by the trappings and veneer of the author's aestheticism. There is a cynical smile throughout the book and an attempt to be witty and brilliant by transporting into it the gay atmosphere of the demimonde.

It relates a banal adventure of the author with Cléo, a mysterious woman whom he follows to Paris and Turin and to whom he lends the background of the shadowy and ambiguous life to be found in a modern metropolis. The following passage describing the heroine and introducing the protagonist will give an idea of the general tone of the novel: "She was in all her body such a prodigy of perfection and of grace that the mere thought of her face made me pale with longing and emotion as if, instead of being a perfect seducer, I were a timid schoolboy before his first lady-love, and as if, instead of having known intimately two hundred and forty-six women, I had never known even one. Let no one marvel at my knowing their number with such great exactness, since, being a scrupulous knight, I keep their list in perfect order."[8] So speaks the new Don Juan and he tries in vain to interest us in his love affair with the enigmatic

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[6] *L'Inferno degli uomini vivi*, p. 2.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[8] *Cléo robes et manteaux*, p. 13.

Cléo. At best, the book should be taken as a farce, although the author did not mean to write one.

In his latest novel, *Azyadéh la donna pallida* ("Azyadéh, the Pale One"), 1928, da Verona has shown even more clearly the banal and commonplace traits of his fiction. His superman has given place to a blasé viveur who exhibits the emptiness of his life and of his soul as he walks through the streets of gay Paris. He characterizes himself thus: "I have decided to close the budget of my existence. What a disaster! . . . My balance is constantly passive. I get bored and I laugh. I go bankrupt and I shrug my shoulders. Whose fault is it? Certainly not mine." [9] This apathetic individual meets, through a friend, a woman, Azyadéh, a pale creature, a strange wanderer of the world, "a daughter of an English sailor who married at Cairo a Greek woman." [10] Azyadéh goes to his room to live with him but excludes love from their relationship. This situation is purposely created by da Verona to insist more crudely than before on the sex theme. The book is hopelessly empty and dull.

The author confesses to us: "I should like to expel from myself by means of kicks and blows this ridiculous sentimental ego which is moved like a calf by all the frauds of life. This small bourgeois is an unbearable person who bothers me with his profession of faith and with his empty rhetoric." [11] Stifling in himself this thoughtful ego, and renouncing what he calls the "romantic lies with which life is woven," the author plunges into a frivolous adventure which affords the main theme of the book. In reality, the essence of the bourgeois triumphs here although we are led to the fashionable quarters of Montmartre and of the Faubourg St. Germain.

The language used in the story is a mixture of French, English, and Italian. One frequently finds paragraphs like these: "You have consumed a 'coquille de langoustine,' one of 'homard,' a 'salade de crevettes,' a slice of 'saumon' with 'salade de concombres,' and you have drunk . . . half a bottle of Pale Ale." [12]

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[9] *Azyadéh la donna pallida*, p. 35.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Taken as a whole, da Verona's work shows a painful void which, at the time of *La vita comincia domani*, the author succeeds in filling with an orgiastic sense of pleasure and later with the account of empty love stories. It is hard to conceive what further depth of decadence can be attained by this writer who about ten years ago attracted the attention not only of a large reading public but also of leading critics like Borgese and Russo.

This is, in its main lines, the development of Guido da Verona. He is a writer of great talent who has wasted his gifts for lack of definite content. Whenever he has felt a situation as a sensitive and thinking individual, he has created characters like Germano Guelfi di Materdomini in *L'Amore che torna* or Giorgio Fieschi in *La vita comincia domani.* Such creations, however, are secondary figures, as the characters who are *real* to the author are their opponents, on whom Guido da Verona lavishes his care and interest. There are, to be sure, beautiful pages in each one of his novels, but the beauty of a novel rests in its entirety and not on scattered fragments.

Guido da Verona was the most popular writer in the years during and immediately following the war. Popularity does not necessarily stand on real merit. His novels acted as a drug on the sickly nerves of post-war Italy. They presented the same passions, the same instincts and lack of moral principles that governed the mob which in those days crowded cabarets and haunts of pleasure. Da Verona's books belong to such places and to such people. Therefore they cannot secure admission into truly great literature.

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[12] *Azyadêh la donna pallida*, p. 29.

LUCIANO ZUCCOLI

(Milan, 1870–Paris, 1929)

Luciano Zuccoli has used the love affairs of the aristocratic circles of Venice, Milan, and Rome as the subject-matter of his novels. As a whole Zuccoli's fiction does not reach the level of the literature, glistening with imagery and doomed to relate a risqué love story, that D'Annunzio wrote for the Sommaruga Circle in the early Nineties.

There is, however, a sincere and human strain in Zuccoli's temperament, which gave a note of pathos to his novels whenever this trait was not stifled by the aesthetic mask that the author forced upon himself. The true Zuccoli is for us the Zuccoli who analyses a child's soul as in *Le cose più grandi di lui* ("Things Greater than He"), 1922, or who feels the tragic situation forced on a woman by society through the passion of a man, as in his first novel, *L'amore di Loredana* ("The Love of Loredana"), 1908.

In this novel Zuccoli expresses his real self. He relates the sorrow of a girl of the middle class, Loredana, who falls in love with Filippo Vagli, a man of the Venetian aristocracy. Love brings a new life not only to the girl but, what is more important, to Filippo, who refuses to give her up in spite of the fact that a wealthy uncle threatens to disinherit him. Even the entreaties of his mother are of no avail. Filippo realizes the wrong that he has done to the girl, and for this reason he feels that he owes her his devotion. According to the social code she becomes his mistress, but there exists a genuine love between them.

This is the main motif in the novel and it brings forth without any moralizing the tragic consequences of such a love, the morbid thirst for scandal in which society delights, and the unspeakable humiliations of poor Loredana.

Even in this novel, we can detect elements that show Zuccoli's dependence upon D'Annunzio. The aristocratic setting of the novel, the description of Vagli's apartment, with its elegance and *objets d'art*, are all evidence of D'Annunzio's influence. Zuccoli, however, limits himself to generalizations about the description of the surroundings of the hero, while D'Annunzio would describe every detail, insisting especially on elements of culture and tradition. Zuccoli's description of Vagli's home, "his elegant apartment to which he brought for so many years beautiful *objets d'art* of real value," [13] is a summing up of all the detailed descriptions that D'Annunzio lavished on the apartments of his decadent heroes, and is in deep contrast with the note of genuine pathos that runs through the novel.

In the succeeding novels, Zuccoli, instead of deepening the sincere tone which one feels in his first novel, yielded to the easier and more popular fashion of the writers who followed in the footsteps of D'Annunzio. *La divina fanciulla* ("The Divine Maiden"), 1920, lends itself to the study of this influence. We have the same characters as in *L'amore di Loredana*: a lover, who belongs to the aristocracy of Rome, a girl of the middle class, the fiancé of this girl, a man of her class, and a nobleman, Michele Barra, who attempts to steal her affection. Prince Dani, however, the lover of Manoela Roderighi, is a much more effeminate individual than Filippo Vagli, just as the girl is much more steeped in corruption than Loredana.

Manoela Roderighi, so the author informs us, was seduced by Michele Barra when she was fifteen and became a part of that world of lost women which society allows to exist for the pleasure of the nobility. She becomes the mistress of Prince Dani di Damasco, who loves her passionately. Michele reappears on the scene and tempts Manoela, arousing the jealousy of Dani. The girl, wishing to avenge herself, plots with Dani against her seducer. The plan consists in attracting him to her, feigning love, and then driving him to despair by a refusal. The game ends tragically. Manoela feels pity for Michele, and when he is about to commit suicide she becomes his mistress again. She flees to London, becomes the mistress of a rich lord and three years later is found slain in her bed.

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[13] *L'amore di Loredana*, p. 72.

Zuccoli seems to have borrowed the plot from a newspaper account of an actual occurrence. He has, however, added to it a great deal of rhetoric and aesthetic veneer. Dani, for instance, feels in his love for Manoela a great mission for the cult and protection of beauty. "Beauty," says he to the girl, "is divine. It imposes duties on us like a great name, like a high social position. It is necessary to defend it from the attack of the brutal mob and to protect it." [14] This idea recurs often in the words of Dani, but it is not at all proved by the characters and their deeds. It is the usual dualism between grandeur of expression and poverty of content, which is a modern form of rhetoric. The fact is that Dani belongs to the creations of the aesthetic school and of the superman. Likewise, Manoela's humanity is hidden and destroyed by the aestheticism of Zuccoli's mood. She is thus described in Dani's home: "There are sometimes heaps of flowers, a wave of fragrant perfumes, and in order to arrange and distribute them, the divine girl throws herself amongst them as if into the water and seems to swim among the roses and pinks and orchids." [15] This is rhetoric of the worst kind, and borders on the grotesque. The description of a person swimming in flowers is hardly to be expected in a decadent poet of the seventeenth century; in a modern writer it is absurd. In the mind of a critical reader it might even arouse the curiosity of wondering about the thorns.

Zuccoli imitates D'Annunzio also in applying religious words and religious objects to the description of a most sensual passion. Speaking of Dani's bedroom, Zuccoli states: "He had created a world of his own, a kind of *sanctuary*, the threshold of which could be overstepped only by the oldest of his servants."[16] There is nothing lofty or sacred in Dani's love, and the attempt to give such a character to it reduces itself to mere words.

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[14] *La divina fanciulla*, p. 135.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

From D'Annunzio Zuccoli also copies the idea of uniting love and cruelty, love and hatred, which D'Annunzio avers would create a closer bond. We look upon these elements as an artificial means of complicating a problem which of its own nature is very simple, and of making a vestal out of a common mistress and a superman out of an ordinary individual. The main theme in the book strives to transform into beauty and purity what is only prosaic lust.

Quite different is Zuccoli's *Le cose più grandi di lui* ("Things Greater than He"), 1922, and we do not hesitate to call it a significant novel. A new deep human note echoes in the book, in which Zuccoli delicately analyzes the sensitive soul of a boy, Giorgio Astori. The novel centers on Giorgio's contact with life. We see him at home, at school, and with his friends. He gazes at life with eager eyes, and is constantly wounded by the commonplace. At home he is surrounded by indifference, for his father, a rich manufacturer, is too busy to pay attention to him and his mother too superficial to understand the needs of Giorgio's sensitive nature. One day Giorgio hears her tell her husband a deliberate lie, a "white lie" to be sure, but an untruth just the same. He is initiated into the hypocrisies of social relations by watching his family and their friends. In pages that are worthy of a great writer, Zuccoli shows us the introspective and imaginative nature of Giorgio. Isolated in his small studio, he fills the monotony of the days of early adolescence with delicate fantasies and exquisite feelings.

Soon the larger things of life begin to loom before him: Death and Love, especially Death. The first revelation comes to him in the sight of a dead horse in the streets of

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[16] *La divina fanciulla*, p. 181.

Rome, then in the cruelty of his childhood friend, Leonia, who incites her dog to catch fish in the pond and afterwards crushes their heads; then, more poignantly, through the suicide of his brother Andrea, and finally through the death of Ada, a girl whom he loved and whom he lost through his timid nature. Life appears to Giorgio summed up in these two words: Death and Love. They are before him, yet they are just beyond his reach. They are greater than he. When Ada dies he follows her, pining away with a disease that no doctor could diagnose.

In another novel, *La straniera in casa* ("A Strange Woman in the House"), 1925, Zuccoli returns to the same monotonous account which is found in all his mediocre novels. Giulia is a sensual woman, whom Zuccoli presents with an impudence that is offensive. There is in this novel the same motif as in *La divina fanciulla*, but freed of every veil. From a good novel we expect more than the complications of the usual triangle, wife, husband, and lover, and deeper problems than Giulia's love affair, ending with the forgiveness of Lamberto, her weak husband. Zuccoli, like many others of this group, labors under the false impression that passion is the whole of life and the only subject worthy of a novel. Fifty years ago such a theme had the zest of novelty; today it causes a disconsolate monotony.

Zuccoli has disclosed his attitude in a sort of essay on life, the title of which is *Il peccato e le tentazioni* ("Sin and Temptations"), 1926. It is strange and sad that only sin and evil should attract Zuccoli's attention, seeing that his art has attained significance only when he has risen above the boring adventures of vulgar and neurotic lovers.

Zuccoli closed his career with *Lo scandalo della Baccanti* ("The Scandal of the Bacchae"), 1929, an historical novel that reveals both his gifts and shortcomings. It deals with the cult of Dionysus which Rome adopted when, having conquered the Orient, it came in contact with the rites of Bacchus. The Roman senate, urged by the austere Cato, discovered the leaders of the movement and punished them with death.

Zuccoli uses the theme to satisfy his craving for the sensual. While protraying Rome at the height of its splendor, at the time that Hannibal was crushed by Scipio, he is attracted by the refinement and effeminacy of the Roman aristocrats. We are told of the luxury in which they lived, of their pleasures and of their orgies. In the description of voluptuous nights, of lucullian banquets, of acts of cruelty and of contamination, there echoes the gossip of ancient Rome not dissimilar from that of the modern city as depicted in *La divina fanciulla.* Of course, a writer merely reveals his temperament when he narrows down to deeds of effeminacy the whole life of such gigantic metropolises as Rome and Paris.

The book lends itself to the display of Zuccoli's skill in painting vivid scenes. His description of the games at the Roman Circus appears impressive and colorful as we witness the struggle between lions and men in the arena amid the morbid excitement of the throngs: "The beasts advance on the yellow sand, beating their flanks with their tails. A lion with a splendid mane of the color of fire dominates the scene. He stands motionless. He roars and other wild beasts roar with him. They are asking for something: to return to their lairs or to fight." [17] The hunters enter. They are "armed with a lance, on white galloping horses." Ten of them are "on foot armed with a trident and a dagger. . . . The scene becomes suddenly tragic, the wild beasts dash as one against the men who are running towards them. For some time there is only a terrible swirling of men and of animals, white croups, tawny and spotted skins, a formidable embrace whence the blood gushes high and there spreads the odor of the beasts." [18] Even here, although admiring the skill of the author, one cannot help feeling his impassionate attitude. A more restrained description without the "blood that gushes high in the air" would satisfy less the eye but touch more deeply the heart of the reader.

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[17] *Lo scandalo delle Baccanti,* p. 229.

[18] *Ibid.,* p. 229.

On the whole, one finds in Zuccoli the aesthetician, that is, the writer in whom the concern over effect effaces the interest in the drama and pathos that are offered to him by the contemplation and study of the characters he portrays.

VIRGILIO BROCCHI

(Orvinio, Rome, 1876–)

The works of this prolific and ponderous writer appear to exist on two planes: a noble vocabulary and style, high-sounding titles, on the one hand; a trivial content made up of little events that stir the stagnant pond of provincial life, on the other. To this outward contrast between form and content corresponds another based on utter pessimism towards the present and dream-like optimism towards the past. His cyclical novel in four volumes: *L'Isola sonante* ("The Resounding Island"), 1911; *La Bottega degli scandali* ("The Shop of Scandal"), 1919; *Sul caval della morte amor cavalca* ("On the Horse of Death, Love Rides"), 1920; *Il lastrico dell' Inferno* ("The Pavement of Hell"), 1921, enables us to make an analysis of the character and temper of Brocchi's art.

In these novels we can picture the author wandering in his Island, representing an industrial town that stands for modern Italy, and trying his skill in sketching different characters that he notices: priests, socialists, workingmen. He follows them as they move in the pursuit of their duties, work in the factory, socialist meetings, elections, the church. These activities are rendered in all their monotony just like a photograph of the little bubbles that break on the stagnant waters of life and emphasize the stillness. One asks himself in vain: What does Brocchi wish to express? The monotony of life, perhaps? But no character is conscious of it and the author is utterly passive in describing it in the first two volumes of the series.

In 1920 Brocchi breaks the monotony of his story of pettiness and gossip by contrasting the present life of the Island with the past. Before the paltry insignificance of the intrigues between Socialists and Populars (the Catholic party) he dreams of the day in which youth and strength enlivened the Island through the pranks of Tommaso Caldari, Giacomo Torracciati, the brothers Martinengo-Orsini, the first two workers, the latter two nobles but drawn together by their love of life. They were daring, as strong as giants (so Brocchi idealizes them), and they cheered the entire Island with their jests. How beautiful the Island was then! "The Spring of eternal youth seemed to run through it and penetrate into Nature while the church bells sent out their silvery voices like ardent kisses." [19]

Two members of this happy generation still survive in the Island, Tommaso and Giacomo, the former still a jester, the latter a melancholy pessimist and anarchist. The war breaks out. A story slowly looms against the background of the preparation for war. Cesarino, a young enthusiast, looks at the war as a means for purification. He goes to the front and entrusts his sweetheart, Lina, to Giacomo. But the Island prepares to take its vengeance on the helpless anarchist, Giacomo, for having opposed the war. They refuse him work, they kill his only friend, an old dog, they slander him on account of Lina and finally drive him to starvation. So the new Island kills the vestiges of the old.

The war monotonously goes on among the intrigues and pettiness of the people. One day the news comes that Cesarino is among the lost. They all believe him dead, when on Easter Day, while the bells ring out the Resurrection, Lina learns that he is a prisoner. It is the dawn of life and love that shines on the misery of this life, on the ravages of war and on the sacrifice of the lonely anarchist and idealist, Giacomo.

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[19] *Sul caval della morte amor cavalca*, p. 50.

This cycle has been followed by another of more recent date under the title of *Il ciclo del Figliuol dell' Uomo* ("The Cycle of the Son of Man"), which comprehends *Il posto nel mondo* ("A Place in the World"), 1921; *Il destino in pugno* ("The Grasp on Destiny"), 1923; and *La rocca sull' onda* ("The Rock on the Waves"), 1926. It marks the passing from the study of a group to that of an individual. One character, Pietruccio Barra, has now taken the place of the motley crowds of the Island. We follow him in his childhood, *Il posto nel mondo;* in his youth, *Il destino in pugno*, and we meet him battling with life and himself in *La rocca sull' onda.*

There rings in these titles a program of virility and action, but Pietruccio has the congenital weakness of D'Annunzio's heroes. Love remains his enemy; love that has ruined Pietruccio's father and brings him to the very verge of ruin. On the whole, one feels that Brocchi's characters exist more through their outward appearance than through the intimate force of their conscience. This is Aestheticism, a modern form of rhetoric.

When we first meet the fourteen-year-old Pietruccio working at a forge and showing supernatural strength, we feel that Brocchi is showing us a superchild, a circumstance that may attract our interest, but does not touch us deeply. Art is creation from within. It is the soul of a character which unfolds as the events and story develop. We feel that Pietruccio lacks a strong inner life to be a *real* character. The exploits in which he struggles to conquer life do not go any further than his becoming entangled in a love affair and breaking away from it, shutting himself up in a disdainful and scoffing grief. Love fills the life of the hero, thus showing the narrow outlook that predominates in the novels, in spite of the vague aspirations toward a life of virility and greatness. "I know that I must suffer and it is right," declares Pietruccio at the end of *La rocca sull' onda*, when he gives up his mistress, Anna, for the love of his children. It is not enough to put there the nobility of his children's love. The impression that one receives is that in ending his erotic adventure he gives up his own calling, the object of his life. This means that Pietruccio (Brocchi) has not yet created for himself a truly virile outlook on life, made up of something else besides adventurous love affairs.

Brocchi has undoubtedly a tragic sense of life which darkens his novels but remains unexplained in them. There is a volume of short stories, *I sentieri della vita* ("The Winding Paths of Life"), 1918, in which Brocchi in a narrower mould has succeeded in giving life to characters that well express his dissatisfaction toward the limitations of human existence. It is the best, in our opinion, that he has produced, but we must confess that in attempting to work on the larger canvas of the novel, that motif remained stifled by the mass of prosaic episodes which weigh heavily on his fiction.

FERDINANDO PAOLIERI

(Florence, 1878–1928)

Ferdinando Paolieri presents in his picture customs and characters from the Tuscan marshes, a swampy and woody region between Tuscany and Rome. From the standpoint of his material he might have been a follower of Verga's school or of D'Annunzio's early portrayals of country life. The overstressed instinctive life of Paolieri's characters, however, link him with the latter, to the point that he represents the very antithesis of Verga.

Paolieri moves within the narrow walls of Aestheticism, as he too uses the passions of man mainly for effect without really living them. He has the passion of the primitive, generated in him by his contempt for the world of today. This longing makes him wander into the Tuscan marshes. He discovers that a marvelous race used to live in these swamps and that a few of them, "superb and ferocious remains of races that are disappearing," [20] still exist. He meets them while hunting in Tuscany and he listens to their tales, which he transforms into short stories and novels. This longing towards a primitive world is the nucleus of Paolieri's art. What gives the full measure of his achievement, however, is the analysis of what he has produced by using this primitive world as the raw material of his art.

The men that we meet in Paolieri's stories are studied more by a painter than by a novelist. We have all the details of their exterior, the graphic description of their faces and bodies, but very little is said about the inner life, necessarily limited, of these elementary beings. Astuzia, one of the characters in a short story in *Novelle selvagge* ("Short Stories of the Wild"), 1918, is thus described: "He had an ugly face all furrowed with wrinkles crossing each other in every direction, sparkling eyes under a grey, long and bristling brow, like that of a satyr; . . . a flaming red neck, and enormous hands intertwined with bluish veins as big as ropes with a knot in the middle." [21] Astuzia's story is very brief. He had committed murder when very young, and now, as no one wanted to hire him and give him work, he was a poacher. Poachers and brigands appear in the other short stories. They live on wild game, fighting continuously against the inclement elements and trying to evade the law. Such a life must not have been able to inspire a highly civilized being like Paolieri, because he has failed to give us a new epic of these primitive men.

In his inability to penetrate into the souls of his characters, Paolieri has complicated their exterior. A novelist discovers the drama of life, even in a primitive life, but Paolieri has given us only beautiful etchings or carefully drawn silhouettes in presenting us individuals suspended between a rudimentary humanity and the beast. Thus he etches a poacher, "Thick-set, a great leonine head with greyish hair over a thick neck, his chest always uncovered, his round, dark arms terminated by enormous hands, bow-legged, with wide feet, he truly had the appearance of a primitive man." [22] "He was not a man, but a beast," [23] we are unceremoniously told of another. In *Lo sposalizio di Fiamma* ("The Marriage of Fiamma"), we witness a wedding banquet in the marshes. "Those men, hairy and fierce, clad in buffalo-skin and covered with sheep-skin, those women with olive-brown complexion and wide feverish eyes, and above all, he [Moro, the bridegroom] and she [Fiamma, the bride], superb and fierce remains of races that have disappeared, produced on me an unforgettable impression." [24] This is a great deal of what Paolieri sees in the life of the Tuscan marshes.

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[20] *Novelle selvagge*, p. 87.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The deeds of these men are naturally primitive: they kill for love, they shun society, they defy the forces of men and nature. Here, too, deepening of tones, or, more plainly, exaggerations are inevitable, and a wedding banquet becomes "an extraordinary primitive feast." [25] Cimino in *Il vento* ("The Wind") used to hasten his steps as he climbed the mountainside, and having reached the peak he "stopped, allowing the gusts of wind to envelop him almost voluptuously." [26] One of these men pressed his knees so hard on the horse on which he was riding that the animal could not breathe.

Nature, too, partakes of these exaggerations. Thus a forest appears to the author's fancy: "Simultaneously, the young oak trees began to shake in a fearful way, agitating their leaves, cracking and writhing like a band of goblins." [27] The wind receives mythological treatment by being termed "the King of the air that gathers in the forest of the Marshes its legendary winged offsprings from the distant mountains, where they howl and vie with the thunderbolts in swiftness." A touch of rococo style finishes the picture by depicting the wind with "swollen face" in the act of blowing.

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[22] *Novelle selvagge*, p. 58.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Such is the atmosphere of *Novelle selvagge* and *Novelle incredibili.* In a later book, *I fuggiaschi* ("The Wanderers"), 1925, resuming themes that appeared in previous short stories, Paolieri describes the exaggerated primitive life on the island of Giglio at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We witness the same violent and bloody passions in the story of Fiamma, the daughter of a venerable carpenter and alderman of the island, and Alì, a pirate. Naturally they must all possess superhuman strength and gigantic bodies and their passions spell death and horror.

The same conception permeates Paolieri's last novel, *Amor senz' ali* ("Love without Wings"), 1927, which deals with modern times. Here we meet Augusta, duchess of Voltri, and a sculptor, Fiorentino, who carry under modern wrappings souls as violent and primitive as those of Fiamma and Alì in *I fuggiaschi.* Love is wingless—so the theme runs through the novel—because the hero and heroine are tied by fate to two beings with sickly bodies. Love can only be complete when two super-beings are united. Fundamentally, the art of Paolieri remains the same as in *Novelle selvagge* and in his later production. Fiorentino shares with the men of the Marshes more than one trait. "His square shoulders, his bull-like neck, his movements, rhythmic and at the same time elastic, certain sudden instinctive outbursts that made him appear like a giant, were certain signs that under his faultless evening clothes was hidden the body of an athlete." [28] Augusta, too, remains the primitive woman, lustful and tempting. These are old motifs and old treatments, and Paolieri has forgotten that the Italian artists of today have seen beyond the body of both the poacher and the modern man in evening clothes or otherwise.

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[27] *Novelle selvagge,* p. 60.

[28] *Amor senz' ali,* p. 32.

The sentiment of the primitive is an old theme in Italian letters. It appeared in the pastoral eclogue and it afforded the only living nucleus in Sannazzaro's *Arcadia* in the fifteenth century. It has since appeared in times of extreme refinement in which it has received purely aesthetic treatment, by many lyric poets from the eighteenth century down to Carducci and D'Annunzio. Artificiality in such a case was and is determined by the fact that the Neo-Classicists of every age and of every country were not able to feel the primitive in a modern way. This theme has been quite differently treated by Verga in *I Malavoglia* and by Fucini in his short stories based precisely on Tuscan life. The former felt the presence of human pathos in the life of the humble peasants of Sicily, as Fucini felt it in the country folks of Tuscany, without imagining them like satyrs or like giants. By feeling them as he does, Paolieri arrives at the grotesque and most of his figures are grotesque.

This severe criticism of Paolieri's works does not mean that there are no beautiful pages in his books. He has a deep love for his art and he polishes his form with extreme care, but he lacks a deep and human spring of inspiration. He has not found his modernity.

ANTONIO BELTRAMELLI

(Forlì, 1880–1930)

Beltramelli presents an exaggerated picture of Romagna that is derived, like Paolieri's, from D'Annunzio's *Novelle della Pescara*. We find in it both the attempt to overemphasize and deform primitive life by making it brutal and gigantic. If we search behind the deserted prairies, the wild forests, the stormy seas, the powerful horses, the giants, the Valkyrie-like maidens who move and struggle in the foreground of Beltramelli's novels and short stories, we find but little human pathos, because all the care of the author has been lavished on description of the physical attributes of men and nature. This conventional Romagna is found in *Anna Perenna*, 1904; *Gli uomini rossi* ("The Reds"), 1904; *I primogeniti* ("The Firstborn"), 1905; and, with subdued tones, also in *Il Cavalier Mostardo*, 1921.

Beltramelli is a true poet, and his real greatness is to be found in the expression of his essentially lyric temperament. If we seek his real self in the rendering of his tumultuous and primitive Romagna, we are bound to be disappointed. After reading his books, one does not remember his characters nor the events that he relates, but there are quiet nooks of Romagna, the greenness and the coolness of which the poet has transported into his art, moonlit frozen nights, pale dawns, intimate sunsets, of which the poet has revealed the charm, and which constitute the living part of his fiction.

After pages and pages of tiresome grandeur, one is suddenly refreshed by the unobtrusive passing of the dream of a child, by the charm of an exquisite and sensitive girl that reminds us of the author's lyric gifts. These figures, however, remain in the background; they do not belong to the central part of the picture, which is occupied by the tumultuous and violent Reds, in whom the author rejoices.

It was the hope of Beltramelli's admirers that he might some day embody in a great novel the lyric motif which is so essentially his. Beltramelli has disappointed them, as he has succeeded no better when, having left aside his gigantic heroes, he has turned to love stories in the series, *La vita umile* ("The Novels of Humble Life"): *L'ombra del mandorlo* ("Under the Shade of the Almond Tree"), 1920; *Ahi, Giacometta, la tua ghirlandetta* ("Alas, Giacometta, your

Little Garland"), 1921; and *Fior d'oliva* ("Olive Flower," a girl's name), 1922.

One is at a loss to explain how the delicate love motif which appears in the beginning of these novels is suddenly engulfed by the monotony of a commonplace adventure. In *Fior d'oliva*, for instance, the longing of a gentle girl for love in the solitude of a Tuscan farm ends in an uninteresting love affair after which the heroine passively returns to her home. Is it the traditional contrast between reality and dream? It does not seem to be, since the author portrays with equal indifference the idyllic aspirations of Fior d'oliva and the banal adventure she meets with when she leaves the sheltered home, where she lived with the old grandmother and a faithful servant. The adventure becomes banal because Beltramelli has failed to endow Fior d'oliva with such a personality and soul as would redeem her love by making her grow through it. The sad truth is that, even at their best, Beltramelli's characters are external and are lyric only by reflection of the author's mood. Their lyricism does not emanate from within. Such are Solicchio, Giacometta, Fior d'oliva, and many other young women who adorn Beltramelli's writings with their diaphanous grace. As we look at Beltramelli's fiction in retrospect we are forced to admit that the central part of his works is occupied by commonplace adventures and mediocre events rather than by the love motif and the lyric characteristics that we so dearly cherish in the author.

There is consequently in these novels a sharp dualism which is evident even in the author's language, which at times is luminous and musical and at times partakes of the vulgarity of a jargon. More serious is this dualism in the characters who move on two distinct planes without ever meeting. Nor has the author reconciled them by showing how a given character can feel attraction for another who is his very antithesis. We do not insist that such a love is not possible. We regret the fact that the author has not explained through the analysis of his characters the events he presents to us.

The best of Beltramelli's novels is *Il Cavalier Mostardo* (1921), in which he portrays one of his political radicals and succeeds in creating a real character. Mostardo is a political "boss" whose ideals are vague to everyone and even to himself. He is the *Republican* of Romagna, the follower of Mazzini's and Garibaldi's idealism, a curious and contradictory type, who aspires to liberty and for this reason hates aristocrats, monarchists and priests; but a man who is jealous and proud of his individualism and hence opposes the Socialists.

Mostardo still has the prodigious strength of Beltramelli's earlier heroes, but the historical setting of the struggle between Republicans and Socialists that afflicted Italy after the war restrains the author's fancy. The plot of the novel is afforded by Mostardo's activities against the Socialists, but the night expeditions and the warfare that are abundantly described are not the important part in the book. What makes Mostardo a significant figure is the fact that Beltramelli has shown us the man in the intimacy of his heart. When we read that he beats a political opponent in a café, when we are told that Mostardo in a fit of anger seizes one of his men by the waist and holds him for several minutes in midair outside of a window, we smile and think of the exploits of the old knights; but when we see Mostardo leave the crowd and the struggle and go to see his Spadarella, a little orphan whom he loves tenderly, we admire something that we were not accustomed to notice in Beltramelli's heroes: the intimacy of the soul.

The atmosphere of the novel has also changed. The Romagna that we find here is no longer that of the earlier books. It is intimate, rendered with directness in its spontaneity and naturalness. At times Beltramelli seems to sing a lullaby in which he pours out all his love for the quiet place of his birth. We read: "Little roads stretch between the caress of the fields in Romagna. There is always the shade of a large oak tree and an old homestead. The little roads are level and tranquil; the dream of tired horses. They go and turn and open on the quietness of peaceful farmhouses. . . . Centuries pass there like beggars." [29] And there is Spadarella, "that little bell, that little 'thing' of his heart"; [30] "that tiny pale face, those hands of hers as light as a breath." [31]

In this portrayal of Spadarella and Mostardo we find the true Beltramelli, a lyric poet, whose delicate touch can often awaken beauty and loveliness in the conventional and false world that he generally presents in his fiction.

ROSSO DA SAN SECONDO

(Caltanisetta, 1887–)

A well-known novelist and playwright, Rosso da San Secondo bases his art on the antagonism between the races of the North, which are, in the author's opinion, cold and sluggish, and the races of the South, warm-blooded and dionysiac.

This contrast, partly explained by the fact that the author, in his youth, travelled extensively in Germany, England, and Holland, affords the main motif of Rosso's first novel, *La fuga* ("The Flight"), 1917. A youth, whose life is steeped in indifference and pessimism, goes to Holland as a guest of the Stürms, a distinguished family, in which the author embodies the sense of self-restraint, coldness, and empty idealism of the northern races. He feels crushed by all their sterile virtue which makes men hypocritical and women stupid. He falls victim to their moralizing, and marries Betty Stürm. Life becomes so intolerable for him that he finally flees with a company of gypsies, galloping across the border towards the warm lands of the south.

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[29] *Il Cavalier Mostardo*, p. 67.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

The novel aims at a caricature of the northern and a glorification of the southern races, but the author fails in bringing out the contrast because the greatness of the southern races is implied rather than shown. In fact, the hero was likewise unhappy while he lived in Italy, and judging from the novel, he seems to be the only real specimen of the glorious enthusiasm of the southern races. The story does not explain, moreover, in what the superiority of the southern races consists. There is not a breath of life in all the brilliancy displayed in the story. The fantastic flight across the border, picturesque as it is, does not add to our understanding of the psychology of the youth, nor does it afford a solution to the novel.

In *La morsa* ("The Vise"), 1918, Rosso tries to give a certain concreteness to his conception of a superior life which he had left unexplained in the previous book. Unfortunately, he embodies it in a clever network of intrigues and erotic adventures which can hardly be looked upon as a superior life. It is merely human existence at best.

Dionisio Solchi in *La morsa* resembles very much the hero of *La fuga* in his pessimism and gloom, until his love affair with Dorina Greni brings to him a sense of new life. He finds in that love what his profession, his devotion to his sister, Beatrice, his very youth, had been unable to give him. When, because of the return of Dorina's sick husband, he is compelled to sever his relations with her, life becomes meaningless for him and he is not happy until, at Marco Greni's death, Dorina becomes his again. "It is so. I don't exist outside of my love; my religion, my morality, my character, are my love." [32] So speaks Dionisio to the shadow of Marco Greni through sleepless nights in which he tries to fathom his love for Dorina.

In *La festa delle rose* ("The Festival of the Roses"), 1920, the theme of the superman, which had already appeared in the heroes of the two preceding novels, is more emphasized with an inevitable diminution of the humanity of both characters and events. Quintilio Majani is the irresistible man who expresses the inexpressible through his musical compositions.

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[32] *La morsa*, p. 244.

The novel centers about the struggle of two women for the love of the great man. Lucilla, his wife, discovers that between Quintilio and Hedda a pure idyll is about to begin. Hedda Blemmer is a blond Dutch girl who admires the great composer and in whose purity and beauty Quintilio Majani finds a new inspiration for his music.

Lucilla, feeling that she is being replaced by the charm of Hedda's purity, contaminates and destroys the young girl's innocence by pretending to be her friend and awakening perversion and passion in her. In this fashion she succeeds in destroying the very source of the idyllic relation between her husband and the young girl. It is plain that here Rosso has gone into the pathological in order to complicate his theme of passion.

Still more decadent is Rosso's novel *La mia esistenza d'acquario* ("My Existence in an Aquarium"), 1926, in which lust and desire take an extremely lyrical form in a woman's narration of her erotic longing. It is both sordid and empty, and the fantastic borders on the grotesque in its complications.

Rosso has given a better proof of his talent as a playwright. His *Marionette, che passione!* ("Marionettes of Passion"), 1918, is a strong drama, or at least an original and striking drama, which compensates for the commonplace novels he has written.

GIUSEPPE BRUNATI

(Milan, 1881–)

Another decadent is Giuseppe Brunati, who delights in describing cases of pathological eroticism that he tries to spiritualize. A strange combination, that of sensuality and spirituality, yet a very common one among the decadents of all ages and countries! Such heterogeneous mixture fills the pages of his two novels: *Oriente Veneziano* ("Venetian Orient"), 1921, and *Quaresinale* ("Lent"), 1921.

Oriente Veneziano reminds one of D'Annunzio's *Il fuoco* ("The Flame of Life"), and the same impure fire burns in the veins of Filippo Spola in his love for Tullia, an outcast. This is natural enough, but the complications begin when we are told that Tullia seeks her redemption in Filippo's love. Filippo is not capable of such an uplifting power, as his love, in spite of all the sacred atmosphere that Brunati tries to lend to it, is nothing but passion. The theme of redemption is used in the novel only to complicate sensuality. Will Tullia receive freedom from passion by plunging into passion? The lack of logic appears very clearly in the fact that the author dwells too sympathetically on the empty life of the hero, who is supposed to be Tullia's redeemer. We see in the book merely a reminiscence and a further development of D'Annunzio's practice of complicating sensuality by injecting into it the element of purity.

One finds the same mood, events, and characters in *Quaresinale*, in which the fusion of sensuality and mysticism is rendered more impressive by the taking of a young priest as a hero and the recounting of his love for a worldly woman. Brunati, like the decadent writers whom we have just analyzed, transports into his fiction the atmosphere of a sensual life, which he tries to transform into a great drama by showing how under the impure flame of passion there is an undercurrent of purity. Great and serious art spurns these complications and heterogeneous mixtures. A frog is a frog even when it tries to become an ox. This tedious re-handling of themes of coarse love affairs leaves us indifferent, and we say: We may even grant that it is so, but what of it? Enough of all this empty and sentimental sensuality, hidden under the veils of purity, or, vice versa, of this purity mysteriously hidden under the flames of passion. This is rhetoric, and as such it is dead.

Brunati himself has repudiated this decadent art in a recent preface to his *Oriente Veneziano*, but his latest novel, *Quanto mi pare* ("As Much as I Like"), 1925, continues his effeminate and perverted mood. Through the most important of his characters, Filippo Spola, he confesses in the preface: "I, the only offspring of an aristocratic mother, educated by a bourgeois father in a bourgeois atmosphere, was a haughty and hysterical dilettante who dictated a fragment of autobiography in a style necessarily decadent and morbid." [33] Yet the old nobleman, Romeo di Tenta, who is the central figure in the book, is as decadent as Filippo Spola. He has all the traits of a character borrowed from the sixteenth century Italian short-story writers, and made morbid by the hypersensitive temperament of the author. This book was originally written in 1907, and therefore it does not show the change produced in Brunati by the sacrifice he made in the war, where he lost a leg. What interest can we have in the narration of the base intrigues between Romeo di Tenta and Celeste Cardina? Why does the author smear with vulgarity and perversion the love between Roberto and Lucetta, the former a superficial man of letters, the latter a charming young girl who is as beautiful as she is naïve and gentle? The tone of the whole book and the commonplace adventures therein related make the novel degenerate into a farce that leaves a feeling of emptiness in the reader.

[33] Preface to new edition of *Oriente Veneziano*, p. xi.

Roberto and Romeo di Tenta are empty characters because the author reflects in them the decadence in which his life stagnated before the war. From an artist like Brunati (one must admire his technique) we expect a new fiction that will express in living characters the new mood to which he has awakened.

MINOR WRITERS

ANNIE VIVANTI

(London, 1868–)

We are also grouping among the decadent writers three women who in their fiction have used passion with a purely aesthetic aim, thus depriving it of the element of drama that it contains. Annie Vivanti, Sibilla Aleramo, and Amalia Guglielminetti with slight variations express the same conception of life and woman. Their fiction, the very counterpart of da Verona's work, is entirely woven on the theme of woman's erotic craving, and is equally superficial and striking, and eventually proves boring.

Annie Vivanti presents in her fiction the type of womanhood, restless and temperamental, which she found and studied in many of her contemporaries. Vivanti, as she reveals herself in her books, lives wholly in her senses; the author describes for us her sensation before the endless ranches of Texas with the same directness, but also superficiality, with which she tells us of her whims and her pleasure in eating vanilla-flavored chocolates. There are no great passions in her novels because she dwarfs them through her sensual character and because her soul is absent in her experience of love. She does not love, and she does not wish to love, either too long or too deeply. Just a whim, a flirtation with sudden flashes of passion, and then to be free again and in search of other thrills.

This is, in its main features, Annie Vivanti's fiction. She exhibits herself without any veils. The sincerity, so much praised by her critics, is undoubtedly a great charm in her. However, it is not enough to be sincere in mediocrity. Sincerity does not constitute the greatness of an art or of an individual. What matters is the life-content that a writer possesses and reveals through his or her sincerity. The characteristic of a sincere transcription of a mediocre existence and temperament appeared even in her early poems (1891) made famous by the presentation of no less a man than Giosuè Carducci. Vivanti sang in the preface: "What do I seek? Nothing. I am waiting for my destiny, and I laugh, and sing, and weep, and fall in love." This was a program for her poetry but it remained such in her future novels as well.

In *Marion* (1891) she presented an exotic cabaret dancer who leaves tragedy and death in the wake of her passion; a girl not different from those of whom she sang in her poems, strange figures of whim and passion, offering their lips to a lover and grasping a knife hidden in their pockets. When after twenty-odd years Vivanti resumed writing, she continued to put into her novels her caprices and fleeting moods of joy, of passion, of sorrow and melancholy, projecting them against the background of London, or Texas, or Paris. This is the Vivanti that we find in her "Armistice Literature": *Zingaresca* ("Gypsy Rhapsody"), 1918; *Naja Tripudians*, 1921; *Sorella di Messalina* ("Sister of Messalina"), 1922. Here again passion is an end in itself and it prevents the writer from reaching that stage in which actual passion becomes ideal reality for the artist who contemplates it. The best of Vivanti's novels is "The Devourers" (1910), first written in English and later translated into Italian under the title of *I divoratori* (1911). It gives us the analysis of Vivanti's feelings in being the mother of an *enfant prodige*. This is Vivanti's own life, as her daughter, Vivien Chartres, was a celebrated violinist at twelve years of age.

There is a sincere and deep strain in the novel and as such it differentiates itself from the fiction written in Italian, which is sadly void of human feelings, in spite of its brilliancy and sincerity.

SIBILLA ALERAMO

(Alessandria, Piedmont, 1878–)

A temperament very much like that of Annie Vivanti's is Sibilla Aleramo's. She attracted considerable attention in 1906 with a novel *Una donna* ("A Woman"). It was a significant novel, passionately introspective and autobiographical. In her later books, however, Aleramo has lost both the simplicity of style and the human content of her earlier novel by replacing these genuine qualities with a bombastic manner of expression and a complicated sensuality.

Una donna tells with the bluntness of truth the experiences of a woman who, grossly offended by her husband, leaves him in order to keep her dignity. She sacrifices everything for it, even her baby, whom she has to abandon. There is a powerful struggle in the soul of this woman, who seeks a liberty that is offended by the narrow and degrading life with a vulgar husband. The book is justly well known and the pages which describe the parting of Rina from her child are worthy of a great artist. But in *Passaggio* ("Passage"), 1919, and in *Amo, dunque sono* ("I love, hence I am"), 1921, the problem of the liberty of woman remains a vague aspiration, and unless we confuse liberty with license, the liberty of Rina is denied by her numerous love affairs filling the pages of these volumes.

Rina, and consequently Aleramo, have not given a concrete meaning to the term "liberty," and hence everything in the novel is nebulous and contradictory. Rina's liberty in *Una donna* had a spiritual value, and her soul and life were truly uplifted, as Rina's husband was a sordid being. The erotic adventures of *Passaggio* do not place her much above him, and we cannot accept the thesis that she seeks her liberty by passing from one love entanglement to another. True liberty had bloomed in sorrow for Rina, when she gained it through giving up her baby, but now liberty is a dead theme, and it makes of *Passaggio* a dead book. The climax, which is really an anti-climax, is reached in *Amo, dunque sono*, an epistolary novel written by Rina to her far-away lover, "a man as beautiful as Adonis," who is interested in occultism, and, it seems, even more in the conquest of ladies. Here, eroticism reaches the stage of perversion, and makes one long all the more for the simplicity and human note of *Una donna.*

AMALIA GUGLIELMINETTI

(Turin, 1885–)

Even more erotic is Amalia Guglielminetti, who expresses in her writings a torment which does not go beyond the morbid exasperation of a pathological being. One finds in her work love affairs between gentlemen and ladies of questionable reputation, with a setting of social gatherings and sleeping cars. It is enough to read *I volti dell' amore* ("Love's Countenances"), 1914, to make possible an idea of the decadent art of this writer. There is in it all the misery of passion, but inflated by a feeling of exultation which tries to lift it to the plane of grandeur. In general, Guglielminetti fails to give anything but social gossip garbed in beautiful words.

When Guglielminetti's work was published it attracted the attention of many morbid-minded Italians. Who would care to re-read today those artificial and empty pages?

In the same years that these books appeared others were fashioning for themselves a new faith and a new conscience. It is time that we leave behind all this empty and commercialized rhetoric and hasten to be refreshed by their tormented but deeply human art, woven on passions that transcend those in which all men more or less share.

IV

THE REACTION TO NATURALISM

NATURALISM, as expressed in the pompous art of Gabriele D'Annunzio and in the dogma of Positivism, prevailed from 1890 to 1912, the time of the Lybian War. It was the period that goes by the name of *Terza Italia* ("The Third Italy"),[1] the time of bankers, of business men, of Socialism, and of abstract eulogism of a progress largely based on a materialistic conception of life.

It was during these years that there appeared, humble and unnoticed, a literature that showed a sense of uneasiness and of spiritual discomfort in the midst of a civilization that meant spiritual stagnation. Positivism in science, materialism in life, the exaltation of instinct in Gabriele D'Annunzio, had a common origin in Naturalism. The new men attacked the whole movement in the name of the spiritual forces of life. They claimed that reducing life to instinct left untouched a richer world that was above and often opposed to instinct. Science had created as strict a dogmatism as that of the Church and this dogmatism failed to include what baffles the analysis of scales and of measurements. The positivistic conception of history looked upon the present moment as a determination of the past, in which the individual had no part. The new men proclaimed the paramount importance of the present and claimed that the past existed only in so far as the individual brought it back to life through the creative activity of this spirit.

These problems, involving a new outlook on science and history, form the basis on which stand the works of those men who, at the time of the decline of Naturalism, expressed a new faith. The positivistic concept of both science and history has to be kept in mind in order to understand the appearance of such works as Villa's *L'Idealismo moderno* ("Modern Idealism"), 1905; Arturo Graf's *Per una fede* ("For a Faith"), 1906; Alfredo Oriani's *La rivolta ideale* ("The Revolt for the Ideal"), 1908. They all challenge the supremacy of science in the name of faith and they claim that the results of the inductive method based on "a direct knowledge afforded by the spontaneous and inner observation"[2] are far superior to those of the empirical method sponsored by Naturalism.

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[1] A modern terminology calls "First Italy" that of the time of the Roman Empire; "Second Italy" that of the Popes; "Third Italy" that of the period since 1870, when the country achieved its political unification.

We have chosen Gian Pietro Lucini (1867–1914), Enrico Annibale Butti (1868–1912), Arturo Graf (1848–1913), Alfredo Panzini (1863–), Luigi Pirandello (1867–) and Italo Svevo (1864–1928), as the first men who, at the very height of D'Annunzio's fame, began to produce a literature that paved the way for the contemporary idealism. Their writings contain a strong undercurrent of idealism, in the name of which they rebel against Positivism, against Materialism, and against the decadent art of D'Annunzio.

In their attitude, they link themselves to a traditional type of men of letters that has frequently appeared in the history of Italian literature. In a country where, since the days of the Renaissance, rhetoric has hidden ghastly social and political conditions, such a type had to thrive. Boccaccio, who, studying human weaknesses, presents them in ludicrous and grotesque situations, was the first of such writers, and Machiavelli, Bandello, Giordano Bruno, Salvator Rosa, and Alfredo Oriani are his worthy followers. They are men who present life in the most sordid details with a laughter that hides grief. They are neither cynical nor vulgar. They are dissatisfied souls longing for a loftier life. Their bitter and gnawing irony redeems their art from the commonplace and raises it to a higher plane, making it dramatic and lending to these men the bearing of a modern Prometheus.

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[2] Villa, *Idealismo moderno*, p. 434.

It is only through this realization that we can understand how, for instance, in Panzini, the gentlest dream is followed by the most offensive coarseness. It is a titanic struggle between two worlds that clash in an endless succession and suspend the writer between the pure ideal and the primitive forces of low instincts. This characteristic is to be found in all the new men that we are about to study with the variations that differences in temperament would necessarily involve.

Lucini, Butti, and Graf, born within a few years of each other, constitute, with Alfredo Panzini, Luigi Pirandello, and Italo Svevo, a homogeneous group. They represent the men of the age of Naturalism who, departing from the creed of their time, showed a new horizon to the younger generation.

GIAN PIETRO LUCINI

(Milan, 1867–1914)

Gian Pietro Lucini first attracts our attention because of his quixotic temperament and of the intellectual trend of his works. He bears a marked resemblance to Cervantes' hero, who often appears in Lucini's pages, casting over them a shadow of sadness and disillusion. He was condemned to loneliness and grief by tuberculosis of the bone that tortured his body as pessimism gnawed into his soul. This circumstance made him more sensitive to the materialistic character of his age and gave to his reactions a violence that increased with the progress of the disease.

He tried every *genre* of literature: philosophy, essay, poetry, drama, the novel, and in all he left traces of a great intellectual force that consumed itself for lack of measure.

His only novel, *Gian Pietro da Core* (1895), is a document of his youth, when he still had faith in the destinies of society. This faith is the very life of the hero, a young philosopher and apostle who sees it destroyed when he tries to put his ideal into action. In the days of the Sommaruga group, when alarming warnings were given for the future of art and beauty, Lucini pictured a society in which art and work went hand in hand. The hero, Gian Pietro da Core, says, "Work is necessary, work for the fields, work for the factory, work for the conscience of man. Toil refines matter and moulds it for the service of the world. Toil brings spirituality and gives soul to matter, and both matter and the conscience of man become divine." [3]

Lucini feels in work a moral force and a moral solution of the social question. The same belief is shared, not only by the hero, but also by a humble and perfectly sketched figure of a vagabond, Menicozzo the Wise. He goes from town to town, showing his marionettes and presenting in the plays of his puppets the drama of man. He does not go to large cities, because he is not understood there. He lingers in small towns and brings joy and laughter to children and to simple folk. "He sought dramas with a happy ending in which avarice, slander, cruelty were destroyed and annihilated in a tyrant, in a villain, in a miser." [4]

This faith makes Lucini linger in describing whatever moves and stirs in the simple, rustic atmosphere of the novel. "In the afternoon, the little square remained deserted and silent. The fountain murmured joyously and the rays of the sun awoke in the basin sparkles and glimmerings as if mobile eyes floated there, and luminous zones, stripes, and flames." [5] Lucini noticed all this, and one feels in his rendering the warmth and beauty of life that was still kind to him.

There is a strong bond of sympathy between Gian Pietro da Core and humble Menicozzo. The latter explains:

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[3] *Gian Pietro da Core*, p. 86.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

"Everywhere he saw injustice, he thought of punishment; everywhere he saw ignorance, he pitted intelligence against brutality. This had always been his action, the ideal action portrayed through him by his marionettes."[6] Gian Pietro da Core agrees with him: "No longer analysis, but creation; no longer science, but religion."[7]

A revolution is planned. In marvelous pages Lucini lets the sense of the immutable character of things human rise from all nature surrounding the hopeful idealists, and envelop and stifle their dreams. The vision of a universal regeneration vanishes in the gray fog of the defeat due to the self-seeking individualism of the rebels. Each "moved, not collectively, but in an isolated manner, as if, common needs having been satisfied, everyone wanted now to satisfy his own personal wants."[8] The revolutionists break into the palace of a nobleman and destroy the art and beauty collected there through the centuries. While Gian Pietro da Core is gazing on those who have been shot, he meditates on the futility of his dreams.

One seeks in vain a unifying thought in Lucini's production. His works must be studied as the expression of an exasperated individualism that passed from one point of view to another with the same restlessness with which his suffering body tried to find rest by changing posture. As experience saddened him and his disease relentlessly gnawed into his limbs, he took refuge in the lofty castle of his ideals and his cerebral adventures were his only realities. As a whole, his art rests chiefly on a dialectic basis and it takes the form of an exasperated discussion with invisible opponents. He directs the darts of his irony especially against D'Annunzio, as is evidenced by his *Antidannunziana* (1914).

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[6] *Gian Pietro da Core*, p. 88.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

The new generation has claimed him[9] and he links himself with it in that he felt life as a conflict of ideas and made his art coincide with his daily experience. "The acts of my life have always been identical with the expression of my art: my life has been my literature,"[10] he confessed in his autobiography written in 1914, a few days before his death. He was proud that he was not a charlatan, and added, "My red thought and my candid honesty are negative virtues in a world where the monotonous gray is more appreciated than full and unequivocal colors."[11]

As is the case of all writers living in a moment of transition, his aspiration towards a new life was vague and indefinite. Yet he is an impressive figure standing on the threshold of our century and ushering in the new generation.

ENRICO ANNIBALE BUTTI

(MILAN, 1868–1912)

To the literature of the masses sponsored by Italian Naturalism, Butti opposes a literature of the individual. In all his production, whether plays, poetry, or novels, there pass haughty individuals enveloped in the disdain of their moral superiority.

Butti has been likened to Gabriele D'Annunzio for this characteristic.[12] No two writers could be more diverse. Butti gives a moral basis to the life of his characters, while D'Annunzio finds in passion the only goal of their action. In Butti, love is a part of the whole scheme of life, and it is used as a means of contrast to portray the inner life of the characters. D'Annunzio dreams sensual adventures for the aristocrats whom he presents in his novels; Butti embodies in this class the hope of a moral regeneration of Italy. D'Annunzio sees in nature a source of pleasure; Butti considers it the magic sorceress that lures man into forsaking his dream of moral grandeur.

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[9] Papini refers to him as "no longer young (at the time of his death) but worthy of being grouped with the new men for certain characteristics of his temperament and of his writings." *Testimonanze*, p. 94.

[10] *Autobiografia*, p. 10.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[12] Lorenzo Gigli, *Il romanzo italiano*, 1913, p. 283.

The contrast in their art is determined by the contrast in their lives. D'Annunzio was happy in his worldly life; Butti, suffering from tuberculosis, lived in a solitude cheered only by the cold light of his ideas. He defended his art from the indifference of editors and of the public with the same passion with which he fought for his life. The haughtiness and sorrow of his characters are a part of his own life and bear the stigmata of a burning truth. Likewise, the thirst for a transcendental world and the faith in the spirituality of the universe that animate his pages acquire a living character from having been the only solace of his secluded existence.

Having studied law and science in his youth, he soon felt that the cold conception of life sponsored by Positivism did not satisfy him. He then turned to a sort of mystic thought based on sorrow and idealism, conceived antagonistically to the world of instinct and earthly realities.

Ideas are to Butti what religion is to Fogazzaro. From this intellectualized mysticism are born his novels, *L'Automa* ("The Automaton"), 1892; *L'Anima* ("The Soul"), 1893; *L'Incantesimo* ("The Enchantment"), 1897.

The hero of *L'Automa* is a young painter who sees everything crumble around him because of a lack of faith. In *L'Automa*, Butti pictures his longing for a mysterious world and expresses his faith in the reality that he feels moving behind the phenomena that constitute the domain of science.

His best novel is *L'Incantesimo*. It illustrates the strong reaction to the materialism in which Italian life stagnated in the Nineties, and it paves the way to an understanding of contemporary idealism. It is a psychological study of

Count Aurelio Imberido, into whom Butti projects the restlessness and uncertainty of his own youth.

Aurelio Imberido is a descendant of a noble family which, after the heroic grandeur of the wars for Italian independence, has fallen prey to sadness and pessimism. His grandfather had been a martyr for the liberty of Italy, but his father, "proud and sensual, had squandered his patrimony in luxury and vice."[13] Offended and hurt, Aurelio has created for himself a sort of intellectual refuge where the voice and stir of life arrive like a distant echo and with the unreality of a nightmare. His true and only reality consists in his ideas. He sees the average man subservient to instinct, and believing himself called to high destinies, he forges for his own guidance a code of iron-clad morality made of renunciation and bitter isolation.

We find him living with his grandmother in a little Alpine town. Confined in his room as in a cell, he thinks of the future, picturing to himself in gloomy colors the conditions of the country, where he felt Socialism was trying to destroy every ideal and to reduce life to grossly material wants. In long vigils and solitude, he dreams of a regeneration of Italy through a new aristocracy that, awakening from its lethargic sleep, may save the country from the sophisms of Democracy.

This life of thought and meditation isolates him from everyone, even from his grandmother and his friends, who, in the eyes of the austere youth, were slaves enthralled to Woman and Instinct. Thus Aurelio dissects his friend, Luciano Zaldini, who is visiting him: "This man sees happiness only in the lowest pleasures of the senses and of sentiment. Ideas, on the contrary, leave him cold, stupefied, or, at the most, curious. He cannot understand how another person may find in them the highest enjoyment of life. . . . Woman, always Woman! He is a slave to the flesh. How can I be the friend of such a man?"[14] Aurelio studies man and life with the curiosity and objectivity of a scientist, and with a disdain untouched by resentment he contrasts his tormented existence with the joyous and happy one of his friend. His temperament is different and still more his mode of living. "I have given up the consolations of love, the turbulent joys afforded to the mob, the low pleasures of the senses. I must be able to look at this spectacle without complaint and resentment."[15] But everything around him speaks of the joy of living and of the fecundity of the earth. The restless waves of the lake, the beauty of the mountains, the song of the birds, the swarming of insects, seem to invite him to obey the law of joy and pleasure. He resists, however, the ruses of nature and finds a bitter solace in being alone with his ideas that open endless vistas before his soul. He is working at this time on three books: "The Future of Human Societies," "Morality of Evolution," and "Socialism and Christianity."

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[13] *L'Incantesimo*, p. 4.

A struggle ensues when Aurelio meets Flavia, a gentle and beautiful young woman. To be true to his ideal, he fights against the growing interest that her charm and beauty awaken in him. Nature invites him: "What abysses those mellow nights, without moon, reflected on the soul of the youth, bent for the first time on the sacred depth of the 'Becoming.' The sky, scintillating with stars, spread over him a poem of joy and passion; the silent and dark country sent towards him the inebriating perfume of the flowers and the vast breath of vegetation that grows and multiplies; the wind caressed his forehead, murmuring divine words, broken sighs, jubilant cries, all the sublime symphony of voluptuousness that the mystery of the night protects and makes sacred."[16] Aurelio rejects Flavia's love in the name of his duty and of the task that he has to accomplish. He considers love a weakness that levels all men, humiliating and destroying them. But gradually he wavers between two conflicting voices that resound in him. One invites him to enjoy what life offers, forgetting his empty dreams; another reminds him of the fleeting character of pleasure. Finally, Aurelio answers the call of Nature and is not happy until he wins Flavia.

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[14] *L'Incantesimo*, p. 42.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Butti and Aurelio are one person till the latter falls in love and reveals his deep passion for Flavia. At this point they part company and Butti, remaining true to his tragic idealism, casts over the vicissitudes of Aurelio's love the shadow of his melancholy. However, although protesting that love is an illusion, he grants to his hero all the joys that he himself never knew but cherished in his heart. Aurelio acquires a new exquisite sensitiveness and grows to understand the voices of beauty and happiness that men hear through love. "His whole being was similar to a white page on which a pen marked at random small, undecipherable signs; it became continuously transformed and altered at the slightest impression of a breath of air, of a perfume, of a sound, of a dim light. . . . Under this kind of tangible and always changing veil which was the surface of his soul, a warm current of tenderness passed, deep, invisible, irresistible—the instinctive and fatal need of peace, happiness and love."[17]

Aurelio's existence becomes a dream of happiness, a poem of joyousness that to us is full of pathos when we think that Butti has created it out of his own loneliness. The author tries to hide himself, as he does not wish to disturb the pathetic idyl of his hero, but finally his real self, his own life nurtured in sorrow, reappears. He whispers to Aurelio, full of the joy of conquest: "It is reality that follows dream. It is the hostile and scoffing light that triumphs over and disperses the shadows of night and breaks the enchantment that they have woven."[18] And when Aurelio from a height gazes down on the surrounding plains and sees the new sun rise above a sea of stagnating fog, Butti sadly comments, closing his novel: "Lost in his *illusion*, he raises his arms triumphantly and greets it as the giver of a day without sunset."[19]

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[17] *L'Incantesimo*, p. 207.

The idea around which the novel pivots is that man, if he renounces love, is condemned to isolation and, if he yields to love, he is destined to be dwarfed into an ordinary being. The longing for the warmth of affection, a hunger that Butti well knew, is presented in a marvelous way. The tenacity with which Aurelio clings to his dying grandmother is touching, and his isolation after her death possesses all the living pathos of Butti's sorrow for the loss of his own mother.

The novel is somewhat diffuse, but it leaves the impression of a real experience of life, lived by a supersensitive and introspective man. In the expression of these qualities rests Butti's greatness. They become more concrete and definite in his plays, and finally they reach a dizzy height in one of the greatest poems of modern times, *Il castello del sogno* ("The Castle of Dream"), 1910. This fantastic poem, written on the threshold of death, is Butti's farewell to life, as he rises toward the solitary Castle of Dreams.

ARTURO GRAF

(Athens, Turin, 1848–1914)

To this group also belongs Arturo Graf, a professor, a critic of great distinction, and a poet who, in his declining years, recanted the belief of his own generation and serenely spoke to the young of the need of a faith.

His poetry, *Medusa*, 1890, was darkened by an oppressing pessimism and fantastic figures, while ghost-like ships sailed into a sea of desolation and gloom. In *Il riscatto* ("Redemption"), 1901, there is a new light that brightens the horizon of life and speaks of serenity and peace. We find in this novel a new treatment of a theme that was dear to the scientists of the time: the law of heredity. Aurelio Ranieri is descended from a family in which the impulse of suicide has been hereditary for centuries. His father, after his wife's death, took his own life and entrusted his son to Count Ranieri, a close friend, who kept the child as his own and even gave him his name. But Aurelio soon began to feel that he did not belong to the Ranieri family. One day, while in Venice, he finds a photograph which startles him; it is that of his father, Marquis Agolanti, whose heir he is. Aurelio understands then his situation, and comes to know why his father tried to destroy even his name. A tragic struggle begins in him. The idea of death looms like a specter before the youth. He goes to Lake Maggiore where a premonition tells him that he will spend the last summer of his life. There he meets an American girl. When he realizes that he loves her, he flees from her, as he does not wish to drag her into the gloom of his destiny. She follows him to Venice and courageously tells him that she wants to share whatever fate is awaiting him. Love wrenches the youth from death and brings a new life to him.

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[18] *L'Incantesimo*, p. 375.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 380.

The naturalistic theme of heredity permeates the novel. But Graf, in treating it, goes beyond the iron-clad law of heredity and replaces the positivistic belief in its law with a deep faith in the ideal forces that abide in the soul of man. Graf's idealism permeates the whole book and creates a dramatic situation between the obscure voice that reaches young Ranieri from the past and his newly acquired faith in the divine character of life.

The struggle of Aurelio Ranieri was Graf's own struggle, and it has the vividness of an experience actually lived. Graf, too, was rescued from pessimism through faith, as he avers in his book, *Per una fede* ("In Search of a Faith"), 1906, written in the form of a confession and embodying his religious experience. It is the voice of a weary but serene man, who, after years of doubt and search, bends his head over learned books and murmurs: Faith.

ALFREDO PANZINI

(SENIGALLIA, 1863–)

The mental reaction of a professor of Greek and Latin who carries his cultural interests and his ideals of classic beauty and rhythmic happiness into the turmoil of modern life—such is the state of mind whence Panzini's art derives. He does not take his adventures tragically but rather is induced to ponder with a sad smile whether the doer is not a wiser being than the eternal dreamer. Panzini has not solved that question, but in that uncertainty and suspension lie the chief strength and charm of his art.

The contrast between him, an intellectual, and his antagonists, men of action, is, in fact, the chief source of his humor. In this respect, his inspiration, although infinitely rich, is a monochord. The contrasting types that appear in his novels are ripples of this undercurrent of perplexed dualism between the dreamer and poet and the modern man, between Panzini himself and anyone who reminds him that the greatest number of men live their lives as a physiological phenomenon. A deeper and richer vein of humor appears when he ironically looks at himself and discovers that under the veils of his classicism and idealism there abides the same man that he caricatures in his contemporaries. The realization dictates to him marvelous pages in which a penetrating analysis of autocriticism creates figures such as the professor in *Verbi transitivi e intransitivi* ("Transitive and Intransitive Verbs"), or the one in *Il topo di biblioteca* ("The Book-Worm").[20]

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[20] *Novelle d'ambo i sessi*, 1918.

In the former of these two short stories, a professor of Greek decides to make his own wine at home. The Atrides, Helen of Troy, and home-made wine: what a contrast! He goes to the market-place to buy his grapes and meets a motley, bustling crowd that has no time to listen to his lengthy way of telling what he wants. He, the professor, is just as concerned about his money as the retail sellers are careful of their fruit. A pupil, Ravelli, whom the professor used to berate for his negligence and ignorance, recognizes his old professor and in no time buys the grapes for him. The professor muses sadly over the fact that, although unable to understand the world of mythology and the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs, Ravelli is a wonder in the world of business and can supply his wants with pure claret.

Il topo di biblioteca presents a university professor, a luminary of learning, who is bitten by a mouse. The little creature threatened to destroy his venerable books, so the professor set a trap, caught the mouse and transfixed it with a long pin. What a barbarian, with all his doctrine and his refined appearance! The professor went further. When he thought that the mouse was dead, he took it by the tail and tried to burn it over a candle. The mouse revived and bit his finger. The fear that rabies might develop ruffled the Olympian calm of the professor, who showed himself to be an ordinary mortal in fearing death.

Alfredo Panzini is a philosopher without a definite system, constantly bent on observing and analyzing man. In the midst of the materialistic civilization of the Nineties, while D'Annunzio preached the creed of the superman, Panzini was one of the first to feel ill at ease and to react against it. He was saddened by the realization of what the pessimists of the *Scapigliatura milanese* had anticipated.

The book in which his attitude is most clearly stated is *Il libro dei morti* ("The Book of the Dead"), 1893. "I am out of place in this society. I am as if lost in it,"[21] says the main character, Giacomo, a man who embodies Panzini's ideal of life. Giacomo had lived in perfect happiness in his country house, following the precepts of the Gospels and of an old epitome of Roman history, two books which represented for him all morality and culture. The sudden industrial growth of the time took him by surprise and saddened the last years of his life.

Panzini shows in him his own faith in an ideal life lived in simplicity and justice. Such had been Giacomo's existence. Although he had not philosophized about life, he was in sympathy neither with Don Leonzio, the priest, who preached detachment from earthly things, nor with the notary who showed him a modern city bustling with maddening activity, feverish and sensual. Giacomo had been able to reconcile in his life the two extreme points of view.

Artistically the book is by far inferior to his subsequent works. Its perusal is rather tedious because of the lengthy discussions in which the author presents his ideas. Panzini's prose still possesses the unwieldy solidity that is characteristic of traditional Italian writers. He still occasionally shows the tendency to present life in a static condition. We may take as an example this description of Giacomo plowing his own fields: "He urged on his great snow-white oxen, and raising his face, he saw the sky before him, aglow with red, and the quivering sea. His oxen filled the plains with deep bellowing, and the sparrows flew away in flocks."[22] The sophisticated Panzini of later days would have smiled at this static description and would, perhaps, have asked whether the oxen bellowed all the time that Giacomo plowed.

A new Panzini appeared in *Le fiabe della virtù* ("The Fables of Virtue"), published twelve years later (1905). Virtue has now become a fable and Panzini hesitates between admiration for the traditional virtue and the reali-

[21] *Il libro dei morti*, p. 136.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

zation that it is painful to those who possess and practise it. Lelio, the doctor, and the young philosopher have taken the place of good and simple Giacomo. Although a collection of short stories, the book has a unity of its own, and the different stories can be considered as the expression of a new mood of the author. They reflect the change that has taken place in Panzini in these twelve years of thought and adventures in the Italian democratic state.

Lelio is a neurasthenic who retires to his villa on the order of a physician to seek complete rest. "And Lelio goes to his villa with the program of stopping that irritating motor of his thought, of living like a plant or like an animal." [23] It is impossible. His brother sends his children there, and a distant cousin, Noretta, comes to recuperate from the effects of self-denial and sacrifice. Lelio's peace is shattered, but in his cousin he has the opportunity to study virtue, a gift or an acid that destroys those who practise it. "It is useless to be neurasthenic or modern; virtue is not a fur that is put on when one is cold and taken off when one is warm; it is something solid, powerful, irresistible." [24] Lelio has to convince himself of this, but he asks, however, in the end: "Why on earth, Mother, did it occur to you to bring me into this world?" [25]

The doctor in *La repubblica delle lettere* ("The Republic of Letters") is presented as a man who, in twenty-five years of secluded existence in the silence of his library, has written a book of short stories with the title of "Cases of My Life." His whole soul and his whole life were poured into that book. He had distilled into it, drop by drop, his own existence. The public rejected it and a critic gave him suggestions as to how to write a book in a modern fashion where woman is extolled rather than ignored.

The same is the case with the son in *Il padre e il figlio* ("Father and Son"). His idealism was not understood by

[23] *Le fiabe della virtù*, p. 5.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

anyone; not by his father absorbed in business, not by the socialists, not by the priest, not by the conservatives. Here, again, Panzini shows us that virtue isolates and even kills.

Le fiabe della virtù is Panzini's best book. It is one of the great books of contemporary literature. The solid, but somewhat lifeless, Giacomo has diffused himself into these new characters, each with a distinct physiognomy, with a subtle and living psychology, complex and deep, suffering and contradictory. Panzini has now found his style, that is to say, his thoughts and ideas have taken life in figures that reflect the inner drama of the writer in a form that has the serenity of classic art.

In 1909 there appeared *La lanterna di Diogene* ("Diogenes' Lantern"). Panzini appears now, like Diogenes, in search of an honest man, but with this difference, that the modern writer knows he will never find one. The novel continues in a humorous vein the theme of the earlier books: the incomprehensibility of modern life with its material progress, the clamorous passing of trains and automobiles, with classes hating each other while Nature spreads over restless humanity the canopy of its luminous magnificence.

This book is a book of nature, of the green valley of the Po, where Panzini finds solace and peace from the tormenting experience of his life as a professor and as a citizen. He confesses that "he is bored to death to be a doctor, an elector, a free slave." [26] On his bicycle he goes from Milan to Bellaria, a town on the Adriatic where he has built for himself a little house, the dream of his life. There he experiences moments of mystic peace. "So great, solemn and eloquent were the silent things around me, so profound was the sense of humility and annihilation within me, that I felt transformed, and I began to tremble as if Nature had revealed to me its innermost essence." [27] He wants to imitate the Christian hermits, the Buddhists, the rebels of

[26] *La lanterna di Diogene*, p. 170.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

society, all those who have refused to continue to play in the eternal farce of human life.

This stage of Nirvana-like bliss of his soul, however, does not last long. The outside world disturbs it and destroys it. There is lust lurking in the peaceful beauty of Nature; there is woman in the world, and Panzini is forced to come out of his ecstasy to find himself stranded on the shore of the immense ocean of life. Then he, in a laughter that hides grief, confesses: "He who follows the hard road that leads to wisdom discovers at a certain point that he has entered the kingdom of madness." [28]

In 1914 there appeared *Santippe* ("Xanthippe") with the sub-title, "A short novel half ancient and half modern." In the preface the author informs us that his book "has no aim at all; it has come into the world just as we come into the world, without any purpose." [29] The novel, in its humorous and grotesque presentation of classical characters, is a parody of wisdom.

In the *Fiabe della virtù* and in *La lanterna di Diogene*, Panzini had faith in an ideal, and he was unhappily suspended between that ideal and the world that offended it. Now Panzini shows the emptiness of ideals and reduces life to a passive experience. Socrates speaks of the immortality of the soul and of the body, prison of the soul, to a youth, Assiaco. Panzini comments: "To Assiaco the prison of his body, in which he had lived comfortably enough, mattered little and the luminous truths were still less important." [30] Socrates himself has lost faith in the truth. "He thought of the stories he had told to Assiaco, of those sudden strange words that had arisen from his heart, and he did not know whether they were stories or realities." [31] This, rather than a humorous portrayal, is a grotesque caricature that destroys itself for lack of content.

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[28] *La lanterna di Diogene*, p. 168.

[29] *Santippe*, p. 10.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 96–97.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

The book is monotonous and dull. Cleverness and brilliancy have taken the place of depth and faith. Monotony results from the fact that the writer is building his novel on two negations: the baseness of Socrates' enemies and the emptiness of Socrates' ideals. These two elements occupy the same place of indifference in the mind of the author, so that there is no contrast, no enthusiasm, and consequently no drama.

In *Viaggio di un povero letterato* ("Journey of a Poor Man of Letters"), 1919, we find again the theme of *La lanterna di Diogene:* musings on life while traveling. The book was the result of a trip through northern Italy made by Panzini in 1913. The cities of Verona, Vicenza, Bologna, and the solitude of Bellaria are used as a mere frame to enclose the poet's meditations. The nature of these has not changed, but they bloom forth in a marvelous variety as the poet journeys on. While debating whether to take a first- or second-class ticket, Panzini remarks, "When we have to strike our shin-bones against the shin-bones of our neighbor, we understand the complications of the evangelical law that seems so simple: love thy neighbor as thyself." [32]

There runs through the book the same motif: the clash between the world of ideals and the world of phenomena. This contradiction is aggravated in the present journey by political events in the Balkans as well as by the sensuality of modern life. Panzini notices and is disturbed by the latest fashions in women's attire. "How sad to realize so late that modesty in women is an invention of man," [33] muses the professor.

On the way to Asiago, the news reaches him of an encounter between Greeks and Bulgarians: fourteen thousand dead! Panzini remarks bitterly that, notwithstanding, life goes on just the same, each individual engaged in his daily task, himself included. "The train puffs laboriously, down there the mowers work, up there the sun performs its task. Why? I bend my head on my arm. I murmur the only consoling name: Christ! Christ! Christ!" [34]

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[32] *Viaggio di un povero letterato*, p. 3.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

We later find Panzini at Bologna at night in a public square where rises the statue of Garibaldi. "Sad fate, that of heroes! Sad fate, that of plants! They want to sleep and they cannot. Electric lights dazzle them and burn them." [35]

The novel goes beyond the boundaries of a poetical guide and breaks into delightful fiction when, at Bologna, the author meets Mimì, once a milliner, later a friend of poets and now a poetess herself. His peregrinations continue, and with them his meditations: literary, philosophical, moral, the analysis of his own life, the history of the past, the destinies of the world that appear to him enveloped by an ominous fog.

There is a little light that gleams in the dark night: the memory of his mother and a name that war has brought back to him—Christ.

His mood does not change in *Il mondo è rotondo* ("The World is Round"), 1921. The war that made him bend his head and murmur, "Christ," brings to him also the realization that while so many young lives have perished, men, on the whole, remain oblivious of this tragic fact. The main character is now Beatus Renatus, in whom Panzini disguises himself. Beatus Renatus "before the war had at his disposal good judgment and polished weapons of thought in the bony fortress of his cranium. But, from that time, his judgment had become confused and his weapons rusty." [36] Beatus is now on a tour of inspection of public schools in the south of Italy, where he meets with adventures that are painful and humiliating to a man of thought. At the end of his tour of inspection he remarks, "It is useless to preach the truth." [37]

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[34] *Viaggio di un povero letterato*, p. 26.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[36] *Il mondo è rotondo*, p. 4.

We find here practically the same attitude as in *Santippe.* However, his pessimism has now assumed the form of a vitally tragic realization, since Beatus, offended by the weakness of man, finds solace in the beauty of a flower and in the song of a nightingale. His pessimism is the living drama of Panzini brought about by the war. "It seemed to him that there was very little difference between the benefactors of humanity and children who play blind man's buff, and that he who, with his colleagues, used to play with philosophy, was not different from the workers who, on Sunday, play games in the wine-shop." [38] We no longer find here the indifference that chills the pages of *Santippe.* "Believe me, to think of it is a ghastly sensation," [39] exclaims Beatus, when the benefactors of humanity have no longer a message for him.

Panzini discovers that the modern world has other gods than the divinities he used to worship: "Honor, gentleness, temperance, compassion." [40] The modern world has the moving-picture stars, and luxury, and pleasure. Beatus sadly concludes: "A new religion has risen without my knowing it." [41] Strange dialogues take place between him and the great men of the past whose pictures hang from the walls of his studio: Plato, Christ, St. Francis, Dante, Galileo, Tolstoi. What did they give to humanity? Truths? Fables?

As Beatus returns home from his tour, new events cause him to lose faith in the words of these great men of the past. The war has destroyed legends, rites, the mystery of the universe, just as modern life has destroyed sorrow and conscience. "It seemed to Beatus that he was living in an atmosphere lucid with an unchanging light: there was no longer darkness, but the air was offensive, the sacred sense of life was wanting, equilibrium was a folly, as the imponderable elements unknown to science were utterly lacking. It seemed to Beatus that he was alone among well-fed, walking corpses."[42] Beatus is above a civilization that has reduced life to physical needs, and he realizes more and more this truth: "If there is no help from Above, from outside the earth, we are lost!"[43]

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[37] *Il mondo è rotondo*, p. 31.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Parallel to these autobiographical musings, there stands a group of novels written in a satirical vein from *Io cerco moglie* ("Wanted—a Wife"), 1920, to "*I tre re con Gelsomino, buffone del re* ("Three Kings, with Gelsomino, the King's Buffoon"), 1927. In these the tragic irony of Beatus gives place to a meaningless smile that partakes of idiocy. These books are not a valuable asset to Panzini's greatness, as they do not add anything to our knowledge of his art. They show only that whenever he abandoned the autobiographical novel, he failed.

There is in them a sustained cleverness that tires one like a perpetual artificial light and that seems to share the nature of the glossy splendor of a modern shop-window. Ginetto Sconer, Leonello, and the list of marriageable girls who are presented in *Io cerco moglie* bear some resemblance to the mannikins that are to be seen in fashionable shops. The vicissitudes of Ginetto Sconer in finding a wife are too light a frame for a novel written by a great artist like Alfredo Panzini, who is ill at ease in the psychology of an empty character like that of the hero.

I tre re con Gelsomino proves also to be a tiresome and empty book. It is not enough to write clever phrases about the nudity of women, about the pomp of courts, about honor and justice. The king, the queen, Gelsomino, Papera, the court chaplain, are puppet-like figures because they are not animated by the life that an artist gives to his creations when his spirit is kindled by an idea. In the autobiographical novels of Panzini, the negative side of the world is looked at through his irony and idealism. Here, the contrast has disappeared and a meaningless laughter runs through the voluminous novel.

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[42] *Il mondo è rotondo*, p. 196.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Panzini has returned to his musing mood in his last book, *I giorni del sole e del grano* ("Days of Sun and Wheat"), 1929. The author has characterized the book thus: "a declaration of love of the earth whence we start and to which we return, and to the sun which fecundates the earth and our thought." [44]

The background is afforded again by his Bellaria villa and the leading theme by the fecundity of the earth, by the sudden passing of death that temporarily obscures the green countryside, by the peasants and workers he meets as he has an old house restored. To this effect he engages the services of a mason, "Amati Pietro, called both Pieruzz and Ciocchet." Panzini has thus the opportunity to study both the spontaneity of Ciocchet's philosophy of life and the directness of Nature's ways.

The value of the book rests on the reflective mood of the author, his thoughts being enclosed in his clear and truly classic style. He sees Ciocchet, who builds a wall, "who puts one stone over another, who builds something that will be alive when we shall be dead. But why do we build? At times, I am seized by such a sense of inertia that I look with wonder at the hand of a man who puts one stone on another and binds them with faith." [45]

There is in this book a strange Panzini, stranger than he was in his other works. He is more natural and sincere, we imagine, and, for this reason, he passes from a deep emotion to a broad laughter, from the religion of mother-love to the Boccaccio-like portrayal of an old curate.

[44] *I giorni del sole e del grano*, p. 10.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Panzini's power, on the whole, narrows down to a short-lived but intense vibration of his spirit which is readily destroyed by his hypercritical mind. For this reason, a varied and limited view of life, afforded as in a journey, is well suited to his sensitiveness, which can react before his critical faculty destroys that moment of emotion. This is the living part of Panzini's art and it explains why he has failed in those novels in which life appears to him in a panoramic view. If we put aside the cultural elements of his art and consider it in its essence, we find in Panzini a man who reduces life to its primitive elements and is discontented with its gigantic and complicated machinery of modern civilization.

Panzini does not possess the robust voice of an epic poet nor the voluble eloquence of Gabriele D'Annunzio. He has a monochord theme, which is the aspiration towards a simple and good life like that of Giacomo, the first of many characters with which he has enriched contemporary Italian letters.

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

(GIRGENTI, 1867–)

Luigi Pirandello, also, reacts against Naturalism. He gazes on the world of instinct which that school has studied and D'Annunzio had glorified and he shows its tragic misery by contrasting it with the boundless ocean of life which flows unrestrained beyond the moulds within which man imprisons this divine power.

Pirandello's art is inwardly philosophical, and over it have passed all the stormy winds of modern thought from Descartes to Schopenhauer and Vaihinger. The problem of the unity or multiplicity of our "self," the absolute and relative value of reality are ever present in his works and are derived from the author's philosophical attitude towards life. His essay on humor, *L'umorismo* ("Humor"), 1908, is a document in which we can study his philosophy and aesthetic principles. If, with the help of his book, we go beyond the apparent cynicism and grim laughter of the author, we discover that there exists in him a strong substratum of mysticism.

Pirandello, strange as it may seem, considers tangible reality the imperfect mould of the sublime and divine content of Life. A mould is the objective concept through which man apprehends life. When we *live*, we subconsciously move in and with this stream of life, like plants, animals, children, and dreamers. Pirandello contrasts man's *sentiment* of life and *concept* about life. To feel is to be steeped and lost in the divine flow of Being and to be obedient to its every bidding, a gift afforded to only a few. To formulate concepts about life is to see ourselves live, to detach ourselves from the universal life, to build fictitious, intellectual structures through which we try to remedy the tragic ills of our isolation. "Man does not have an idea, an absolute concept of life, but rather a changing and varied sentiment according to time, cases, and circumstances."[46] Through our abstractions, we lose touch with the true realities of human existence. Lust, daily routine, empty rhetoric, social customs and laws, and all human hypocrisies are but means of beclouding the real issue of life. Most of Pirandello's works are developments of the various aspects of the problem of Being and Becoming.

We can see in what relation Pirandello's idealism stands to its artistic expression in *La casa del Granella* ("Granella's House"), a short story, the motivation of which is the belief in the immortality of the soul. This subject, instead of being embodied in a philosophical dialogue in the fashion of Plato, becomes a humorous treatment of spiritualism. A lawyer, Signor Summo, "a serious and cultured man imbued with positivistic science," at first laughs at the story of a haunted house told by the three odd members of the Piccirilli family who find it impossible to live there. When, in order to defend his clients, Summo begins to study spiritualism, he discovers that a new light shines on him and on humanity. "Science, with its strong but cold instruments, with its excessively rigorous formalism, had stifled Nature. . . . Now mystery was beginning to open its dark doors . . . shadows, still uncertain and ominous, were creeping towards and reaching trembling humanity, revealing to it the world of the beyond; strange light, strange sounds." [47] He studies all the literature on the subject that is available to him "from Crookes to Wagner and Aksakof, from Gibier to Zoellner, Janet, Rochas, Richet and Morselli," and acquires a scientific certitude about the phenomena pertaining to spiritualism. He goes to court and makes an eloquent defense of his clients but is defeated by the cold indifference of the law. Granella, the proprietor of the house, "a big man of about fifty years, heavy and sanguine," is very happy and ridicules both Summo and his ideas. He boasts that he will go to sleep in the house that very night. He does, in fact. But he is terrified. Summo, who is awaiting outside, when he sees Granella fleeing the house in terror shouts to him: "'Do you believe now, you imbecile, in the immortality of the soul? Blind justice has proclaimed that you are right. You have now opened your eyes. What have you seen? Speak!' But poor Granella, quivering all over, whimpering with fright, cannot speak." [48]

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[46] *L'umorismo*, p. 218.

The impression has been given that Pirandello expresses a sort of categorical pessimism. His own statements in *L'umorismo* repudiate this, and an analysis of his characters reveals that the grotesque situations in which they are placed are determined by their tortuous intellectualization of life. In the above-mentioned essay, Pirandello states his attitude in no uncertain terms. "In certain moments of inner silence in which our soul divests itself of all its habitual hypocrisies and our eyes become sharper and more penetrating, we see ourselves steeped in life and we see life in its essence. Then, suddenly, we are seized by a strange impression through which we perceive a reality different from the one we ordinarily perceive, a reality existing beyond all human vision and outside the moulds of human reason." [49] Indeed, his idealism rises to the dizzy heights of mysticism, as he believes that man lives on this earth as if in exile and is tormented by a constant longing for the universal realm of which he is a stranded particle. "We have, perhaps, always lived with the universe, we shall always live with it. Even now, in this mould of ours we are a part of all the manifestations of the universe. We do not know it, we do not see it, because, unfortunately, that spark which Prometheus gave us allows us to see only as far as where it sheds its dim light." [50]

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[47] *Novelle per un anno*, Vol. II, p. 3.

[48] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 120.

How is it, then, that man estranges himself from life and loses himself in a maze of contradictions? Pirandello discusses his theories with the clearness and the passion of one who has spent years of meditation on these vital problems. His idealism grew and developed in the solitude of Monte Cave, where in an abandoned convent he sought refuge from the stir of Roman life. It was here that, after his return from Germany, he wrote his first novel, *L'Esclusa* ("The Outcast"), 1901. According to Pirandello, man, unlike plants and beasts, is endowed with intellect and "with an infernal mechanism called logic. Our brain pumps through it our sentiments and transforms them into concepts. Through this process, sentiment loses all its warmth and fluidity. It cools, it becomes purified, idealized, and it is transformed into a general abstract idea." [51] These abstractions deform reality, in so far as life is in a constant process of flux and change. Since our abstractions are subsequent to the reality that we conceive, it is evident that our concepts enclose a reality which is no longer existent.

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[49] *L'umorismo*, p. 218.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

The first of Pirandello's novels, *L'Esclusa*, already shows this philosophical trait of the author, who thereby infuses a new life into the provincial atmosphere and characters that, like Verga and Capuana, he portrays. The whole novel pivots on the belief of Rocco Pentagora that every man in his family is destined to be betrayed by his wife. Having found some letters of an admirer, he sends his innocent wife back to her home. A life of hardship begins for her. She is ruined. Everyone believes her adulterous and shuns her. She goes to Palermo to teach and is so persecuted that she, without love, goes for protection to the man who had compromised her. Her husband, who had tried in vain to live without her, appears and receives her again in his home. It is in this fashion that Pirandello the humorist shows us with grim laughter what pranks our reasoning process can play.

It is the same in *Il turno* ("In Turn"), 1902, where cold reasoning makes Don Marcantonio Ravi marry his beautiful young daughter to Don Diego Alcozer, who is seventy-two years old and four times a widower. Soon after the wedding, tragedy looms for Stellina, who becomes perverse and wanton. Ciro Coppa, a lawyer, succeeds in having the marriage annulled and in marrying Stellina. He is so jealous of her and so tormented by his jealousy that in a fit of anger he dies. Then comes the turn of young Pepe Alletto, her former fiancé, who marries her.

The outstanding character is the violent Ciro, who seems to have in his blood all the jealousy of the old Saracens that once ruled Sicily. The cohesive force, however, that links together the bizarre incidents of the novel is the "reasoning" of old Ravi, who thereby complicated life and spelled unhappiness and death for all concerned.

It is of paramount importance to point out that the grotesque presentation of man so much in evidence in his works is the result of the process of intellectualization to which man subjects life. These deformations are pictured against the lofty vision of the author, and behind the crowd of odd characters there looms the thoughtful and wistful countenance of Pirandello, both amused and grieved at the strange vicissitudes of man on this earth.

Most of Pirandello's works are carried on the plane of the inward contradiction that besets the tormented spirit of his characters. Contrast, studied in endless situations, is the chief source of his art, as evidenced by the very titles of his early books, such as *Amori senz' amore* ("Love without Love"), 1894; *Beffe della morte e della vita* ("Jests of Death and of Life"), 1902; *Bianche e nere* ("Black and White Stories"), 1904; *Erma bifronte* ("Two-faced Hermes"), 1906. From contrast there springs humor and the greater the contrast between life as an ideal entity and life as a tangible expression, the more grotesque become the characters and the stranger their vicissitudes. We then find the characters who are an original and typical creation of Pirandello, beings in whom an idea becomes an obsession that transforms them into pitiful automata. They are the projection of the universal term "man" into a multitude of beings, grotesque yet throbbing with the tortured humanity that Pirandello lends to them. In a sense his characters are his antagonists, but since he realizes that they are human and a part of his own humanity, his irony softens into pity for the ludicrous situations in which they are placed.

On the whole, we see a negative humanity portrayed in Pirandello's books, but now and then a breath of purity passes over his stories when a child or a queer looking vagabond appears, carrying in its heart all the original beauty and sweetness of life. Then we get a glimpse of the luminous idealism which grotesque and often obscene happenings seem to obscure.

Pirandello's art has gone through a process of clarification rather than evolution. Even in his first short stories and novels, his attitude appeared clearly outlined, and it has not substantially changed from *L'Esclusa* to *Uno, Nessuno e Centomila* ("One, No One, A Hundred Thousand"), 1926. As years have passed, he has more clearly defined his position by illustrating its different phases. Dates are consequently of no avail to an understanding of his art. The task of the critic is to present the various stages of Pirandello's drama in considering the problem of Being and Becoming.

The first act of this gigantic and Dantesque drama pivots around a tragic realization on the part of the philosophical novelist: life as an ideal substance lacks expression, yet once it enters a human mould, it becomes dwarfed, deformed, and it is eventually destroyed. This motif is found in *I vecchi e i giovani* ("The Old and the Young"), 1913. The plot is afforded by the vicissitudes of two generations, the one that fought the battles of Italian independence in the heroic days of Garibaldi, and the other that saw Italy's entry into the modern world of practical activity. It is a chapter of national life that Pirandello witnessed in his youth, pondering over its tragic vicissitudes. The tormented musing of the young writer constitutes the very life of the novel that unfolds, having as a background the corruption of the Roman Bank and the socialistic upheaval in Sicily in the early Nineties. He sees the glory of the older generation sink into the slough of political intrigues, and notices the restlessness of the younger one which finds itself submerged in the same slimy waters. The sad realization translates itself into a philosophical theme which the author develops in the story: when we transport heroism into the monotony and objectiveness of the daily life, "the hero dies; man survives and fares badly." [52] Francesco d'Atri, Ippolito Laurentano, Lando Laurentano, Corrado Selmi are all, old or young, oppressed by the same tragic weight: life that has crystallized in a mould, in which sentiment has disappeared and reason rules. All the characters say this and torment themselves, unable to understand the root of the evil. Lando Laurentano in the silence of his library shouts: "Artificial compositions, life made static, caught in immutable moulds, logical constructions, mental structures, inductions, deductions, away, away with them!" [53] The contrast is not so much between the old and the young, as each generation is equally tormented, but between both of them and life conceived as a fluid sentiment. Pirandello embodies the ideal of life in Mauro Mortara, an old soldier who has kept pure the glory of his youth through the warmth of sentiment. When he realizes his long-cherished dream of visiting Rome, he refuses a guide and also refuses to learn anything about the different monuments. "He did not wish to know, he intuitively feared that every bit of information or knowledge might dwarf that boundless, fluctuating image of grandeur that sentiment created in him." [54] He has likewise refused a pension. "A pension? He? Why a pension? To take money for what he had done? Rather lose his hands than accept it." [55]

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[52] *I vecchi e i giovani*, p. 47.

This is the ideal that Pirandello cherishes: to refuse, like the old veteran, to let life be crystallized in a given mould. Lando Laurentano, one of the younger generation and a socialist, respects the pure enthusiasm of the old Garibaldine, and feels more poignantly the sordidness of his own times. "His sight [of Mauro Mortara], his presence in Rome in those days, made all those who, like greedy merchants and speculators, had taken advantage of the luck of having been born in a glorious moment appear more filthy and more disgusting." [56] What was the difference between the dreamer, Mauro Mortara, who lived in solitude, and the others who had plunged into the whirl of modern life? "He did not *think;* he only *felt!* A glowing flame which found its beatitude in its own light and warmth, and kindled everything around him with this light."[57]

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[53] *I vecchi e i giovani*, p. 50.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

There are other characters in the novel which exemplify life kept pure from contamination and change. Next to Mauro Mortara appears a flower of sweetness and beauty, Dianella Salvo, who loses her mind when her fiancé is killed in an uprising. The mad child finds peace only near the poor peasant and old soldier. Only to him can she talk and only by him be understood. Different, but, in his own way, reconciled with life, is Don Cosmo Laurentano, a man "outside of life, in that ancient and solitary countryside," who possesses a "disconsolate wisdom and eyes which seem to fight back and disperse into the vanity of time all the bitter and disturbing contingencies of life."[58] He has succeeded in stopping the torment of his thought, the uncertainty of his intellect, by retiring to the solitude of his villa where he lives in the company of Mauro Mortara and three mastiffs.

Quite different is the life of the other characters. The aged Francesco d'Atri, his young wife, Donna Giannetta, Corrado Selmi, Don Ippolito Laurentano, Donna Adelaide, Lando Laurentano, live in a tormented exasperation and tension, and the tormentor is their own thought. They cannot bear seeing themselves in a mirror, as their reflection shows the static ugliness of their life. They fear that image and they seek darkness like pursued beasts. The situation of these characters looking at themselves in a mirror returns again and again in the novel.

The same phase of the dialectic drama of the author is illustrated in *Si gira* ("Shoot"), 1916. Pirandello identifies himself with the cinema operator, Sarafino Gubbio. The latter's passiveness in taking films represents the author's objectiveness in studying man and life. "The chief characteristic required in a man of my profession is passiveness in face of the action that is going on in front of the camera." [59] He has reached such a degree of passiveness that he can call himself "a hand that turns the handle." Like Sarafino Gubbio, Pirandello sees men and women moving like automata in modern life and asks himself "whether really all this clamorous and busy machinery of life which from day to day seems to become more complicated and to move with greater speed, has not reduced the human race to such a condition of insanity that presently we must break out in fury and overthrow and destroy everything." [60] Sarafino Gubbio contemplates people who move frantically and aimlessly here and there. He searches in their souls with his penetrating eyes and discovers all the misery that they try to lull or to palliate with excitement.

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[57] *I vecchi e i giovani*, p. 49.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

The flimsy plot of the novel pivots on the cinema operator's cold analysis of the empty life of the cinema stars and directors: intrigues, love affairs, pettiness, hatred, until death makes its grim entrance and unravels the knots of those complicated lives. The motley crowd that he dissects is contrasted with a group of characters in whom life has kept its original simplicity. It is Simone Rau, "a man of singular originality and freedom from prejudice,"[61] a queer-looking philosopher who, in the silence of the night, spoke thus to Sarafino Gubbio, who had gone to Rome in search of a position: "Excuse me, but what do I know about the mountain, the tree, the sea? The mountain is a mountain because I say it is a mountain. In other words, I am the mountain." [62] Simone Rau took his friend Sarafino Gubbio to "the casual shelter," a sort of retreat for vagrants. Here Sarafino meets strange individuals representing the "wretched stage to which progress condemns the human race."[63] Among them there is an old violinist who embodies

[59] *Si gira*, p. 7.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

the beauty and power of music tragically lost, according to Pirandello, to modern civilization.

Sarafino had just left Naples, where he had known the perfection of life in the exquisite beauty and charm of the Mirelli family: Grandfather Carlo and Granny Rosa, watching over two children, Georgio Mirelli and young Duccella, in a jasmine garden. There are exquisite pages in which Pirandello describes the consummate beauty of that retreat, a retreat very different from that of the tramps in Rome but embodying the same ideal life. They all live outside of modern civilization, they are outcasts, but their acts are noble and their thoughts delicate through their cult of art and beauty. As soon as Georgio Mirelli, an artist, leaves his retreat and goes into life, he meets with tragedy. He falls in love with a Russian artist, Madame Nestorof, and is led to suicide.

The tone of the novel is eminently anti-social. Sarafino looks with the utmost disdain at modern civilization that has no meaning for him. "Man, having flung aside every feeling, has set to work to fashion out of iron and steel his new deities, and has become a servant and a slave to them." [64] When Sarafino Gubbio finds a position in the cinema as an operator, he meets the same fatal woman, Madame Nestorof, who had caused the death of his young friend, Georgio Mirelli. He has now the opportunity to study the wiles and the complicated nature of this strange person, as well as the miseries of the Cavalena family, of the director and the different actors. He offers a disconsolate picture of their existence and concludes: "While nature knows no other house than the den or cave, society *constructs* houses; and man, when he comes from a constructed house, entering into relations with his fellow men, constructs himself also . . . and so, in the heart of things, that is to say, inside these constructions of ours, there remain carefully hidden our most intimate thoughts, our most secret feelings." [65]

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[64] *Si gira*, p. 9.

The novel closes with the death of Madame Nestorof and of her admirer, Aldo Nuti, a friend of Georgio Mirelli and once the fiancé of the sweet Duccella. Life has not been more merciful towards the Mirelli family, which after Georgio's death lives in squalid misery. Sarafino, who goes to see them, is seized with horror. To what a state had time reduced "Duccella, the blushing flower, and Granny Rosa, the gardener of the villa with its jasmines!" [66]

Pirandello shows through Sarafino his grief and astonishment. "Thanks to everybody. I have had enough. I prefer to remain like this. The times are what they are; life is what it is. I intend to go on as I am, alone, mute, and impassive, for I am merely the operator. Is the stage set? Are you ready? Shoot!" [67]

Had Pirandello stopped here, he would have resembled other writers, tormented by the malady we know under the name *mal du siècle* or *maladie de l'infini.* However, endowed with a penetrating intellect, Pirandello goes further and enriches his drama by discovering that the abstract creations of man, although fictitious, are indispensable to him. Once a man has crystallized his life in a given form, he tries in vain to break it.

To this mood and to this stage of Pirandello's inner drama belongs his novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal* ("The Late Mattia Pascal"), 1904. Mattia Pascal attempts artificially to create for himself a life different from the monotonous existence that he has lived for years. His life has been imprisoned in a deadly mould. He breaks away from it and becomes free again. Woe to him! Because he destroys that mould, he is excluded altogether from life.

All that has been said about Pirandello's dialectic drama helps us to understand the genesis of his art, but it does not show how it passed from an abstract state into a living character. Mattia Pascal is not the man that a scientist would conceive. He is a man with all the peculiarities that the relative value of the word implies. Thus he explains the antagonism of an old aunt towards him: "It must have been my placid and irritating face, and those big round spectacles which were given to me to correct one eye, which for some reason or other insisted on looking elsewhere." [68] This and other peculiarities he reveals to us, such as his small nose, which was lost between a reddish, curly, thick beard and a high forehead. Thus far Pirandello has made a comic sketch of his character. We can look at him and laugh. Soon, however, we discover a tragic humanity beneath his ugly and ludicrous face. There the comic gives place to the grotesque, and as Mattia Pascal tells us the happenings of his life we are torn by two opposite feelings, pity and amusement.

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[65] *Si gira,* p. 158.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 334.

After a thoughtless youth, which ended in his marriage to Romilda, a commonplace girl who tricked him into a wedding, he became librarian in a small town. Rats were the only visitors and his whole life consisted in defending the old books from them. The monotony of his life enveloped him like a leaden cloak. Sometimes he used to go to a lonely shore of a nearby sea. "The unchanging condition of my existence suggested to me sudden and strange thoughts, similar to flashes of folly. I leaped to my feet as if to shake them off, and I began to walk up and down the beach. But I saw the sea sending unceasingly its tired, sluggish waves to the shore; I saw the abandoned sand and I shouted with rage, shaking my fists: 'But why? Why?'" [69]

His baby and his mother die on the same day, almost at the same hour, and he is desperate. He flees to Monte Carlo, gambles and wins a large sum. He decides to go home, but while on the train he reads in a newspaper the news that his body has been found in a mill. At the first station he alights quickly in order to deny the report. "That leap saved me. That stupid idea [of going home] seemed to have been shaken from my brain. I saw in a flash, yes, my freedom, the liberty of a new life." [70]

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[68] *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, p. 18.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Pirandello, the critic and philosopher, would comment here that Mattia Pascal has seen the emptiness of his former life, when he lived in the ghastly atmosphere of his home and in the monotony of his library. He explains in his *Umorismo*: "Life which moves monotonously among these appearances seems to us no longer to exist and appears like a mechanical product of fancy." [71] Suddenly Mattia Pascal breaks the mould of his unbearable existence, and reenters the "fluidity of life," unshackled and free. He changes his name to that of Adriano Meis, and creates for this new being a past. It is exhilarating to be free, but soon he begins to feel the weight of his liberty. He is alone, terribly alone. He has no friends, no home, no affection, he is cut off from life. "I am no one. We are alone on this earth, my shadow and myself. I have carried around this shadow, here and there, continuously, and I have never stopped long enough anywhere to contract a lasting friendship with it." [72]

He goes to live in Rome and, after two years of an eventful existence, he confesses, "I saw myself excluded forever from life without the possibility of ever re-entering into it." [73] In order to resume his former personality, he leaves a note on the bank of the river giving the impression that Adriano Meis has drowned himself. He is again Mattia Pascal, and returns to his native Miragno. In vain! Life has gone on there, and he is no longer part of it. His wife has remarried and has a little daughter;

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[70] *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, p. 89.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

no one even recognizes him. He then goes to the cemetery and places a wreath on the tomb of Mattia Pascal.

Mattia Pascal, who considers himself dead, brings before us a further development of Pirandello's dialectic drama: Is it possible to re-enter the stream of life to which we belong? The answer, which wavers between mysticism and humor, is: Yes, through death, through personal annihilation, through complete innocence, and mostly through illusion.

Many of his short stories illustrate these strange solutions and they are masterpieces on which chiefly rests Pirandello's greatness. They make one think of an oppressive and leaden sky in which there suddenly opens the horizon of the infinite.

To an even greater degree has Pirandello resumed this theme in his latest novel, *Uno, nessuno e centomila* ("One, No One, One Hundred Thousand"), 1926. We find in it the problem of the complexity of human personality. Pirandello shows how tragic it is to realize that, although we believe we possess a distinct personality, we actually have no objective identity, as we vary according to the people who look at us.

Angelo Moscarda, the hero, has always believed himself to be one distinct personality. One day, while looking at himself in the mirror, he discovers that he has many physical peculiarities that he has never suspected himself of possessing. His wife, whom he consults, testifies to the accuracy of his discovery. This realization, growing in intensity, leads him to analyze his life, his profession, and his family. A surge of unspeakable pity comes over him as he sees himself caught in the prison of time, painfully carrying the nullity of his self. He is compelled to acknowledge that he is one specific person for himself, another for his wife, one for his business administrator, a different one for every person who knows him in his native town. His very moral character is not his own, as he is credited with being a usurer simply because his father was one. He decides to shake off all these false constructions which have enveloped and stifled his real self. He wants to destroy the fixity of his existence and to live in each aspect of life and nature, that is to say, to be a "hundred thousand" or as many as the manifold aspects of the universe. He is happy in this passive state of existence, as he is open to all impressions from the outside world. But in so doing he loses everything; his wife, his friends, his wealth. He ends in a poor-house, which he has built in order to make amends for his father's extortions. Yet in his "madness" he is completely happy.

This, which the world would call madness, is, in its last analysis, the "holy madness" of the mystics, as St. Francis characterized it. Moscarda, too, reaches the solution of the mystics—he loses his identity as a man of the world and becomes one of the poor sheltered in the home. But he is unfettered from every mould, free to live life in its primal fluidity. "Only thus can I live now. To be born again at every moment. To prevent my *thought* from working again and creating within me empty constructions." [74]

His holy madness begins when, rebelling against fictitious constructions of men who look upon him as a usurer, he discovers "a living point" in himself which he identifies with God. "God has been wounded in me; God could no longer tolerate that others should look upon me as a usurer." [75]

Now in the quiet home on the top of the hill, Angelo Moscarda lives steeped in each tender aspect of Nature, fluid like life, spontaneous like the dawn, like the clouds, like the blue hue of the sky, like a blade of grass. "I go out every morning at dawn, because I wish to keep my soul fresh with the freshness of the dawn." [76]

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[74] *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, p. 28.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

In this fashion, Pirandello concludes his problem of Being and Becoming: destruction of the process of intellectualization to which we subject life, return to what is spontaneous, pure, and holy, even if we have to relinquish society and family, riches and pleasures, like the mystics.

We have tried to find in Pirandello the idealist of all times, that is to say, the man who, steeped in the relativity of the daily life, rises to the vision of the absolute. It is Neo-Platonism in modern form, and it is Hegel as introduced into Italy by Camillo De Meis whose name Pirandello gave to Mattia Pascal, one of his greatest characters. It was, moreover, the philosophy of Giuseppe Ferrari, a disciple of the idealism of Mazzini, and a man who, like Plato and Hegel, felt the shadows of the infinite cast over the contingencies of the tangible universe.

The contrast between the dialectic motivation of Pirandello and the average stature of his characters has brought about two opposite recriminations from the critics. Some [77] have called Pirandello's art intellectual; others [78] have resented the fact that he has not presented more complex characters.

It is not without significance that Pirandello was urged to write novels by Luigi Capuana, the theorist of the naturalistic movement. Although he transcends Naturalism, Pirandello follows the precepts of that school in studying the average man, and in the presenting of human passions in their natural proportions. A student of philosophy and an original thinker, he gives to naturalistic themes a background of ideas which lends to them a universal character.

Historically, the idealism of Pirandello reacts against the absolute value that science gave to its concept of life. The negation of the oneness of human personality, the stress laid on the belief that a fictitious reality is stronger than the "true" reality, that sentiment is a living element, while concepts and abstractions are empty moulds, are all problems which emanate from the author's reactions to the dogmatic and absolute value given to science in the days of Positivism. Pirandello, having grown up in those beliefs, soon found that life baffled scientific limitations and that the tangible reality was a small prison for the universal life that he felt moving like a swift river, outside and in him.

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[77] A. Tilgher, *Studi sul teatro contemporaneo;* U. Ojetti, *Cose viste.*

[78] G. A. Borgese, *Tempo di edificare;* R. Serra, *Scritti critici.*

Without this deep faith in and longing for the world of mysteries and shadows, Pirandello's art appears to be a form of comic art. Pictured against a background of his Idealism, it becomes a sublime epic of the human conscience, and it assumes the pathos of the drama of a man who, living in the time in which Positivism believed it had destroyed all religions, voices in a new and strange, but passionate way his faith in the infinite.

ITALO SVEVO

(Trieste, 1864–1928)

Most of the contemporary Italian literature owes its greatness largely to these men of the transition from Naturalism to Neo-Idealism whose chief spokesmen are Panzini and Pirandello. The same attitude towards art is found in the works of Italo Svevo. In 1921 his novel, *La coscienza di Zeno* ("Zeno's Conscience") revealed to the reading public and to critics a writer who, though no longer young, possessed all the characteristic traits of the men of the new generation. The interest thus aroused led to the discovery that Svevo, a score of years previously, had published two novels, *Una vita* ("A Life"), 1893, and *Senilità* ("Senility"), 1898, which had passed almost unnoticed. It was the fate of most of these men of the transition period to be neglected and ignored and, like Pirandello, Svevo owes his fame to a French critic, Benjamin Crémieux, who in 1921 discovered the significance and modernity of his fiction.

Svevo's art is deeply psychological and introspective. In each of the three novels mentioned, one finds the author's analysis of essentially the same type of man, whether he is Alfonso Nitti of *Una vita*, Emilio Brentani of *Senilità*, or Zeno Cosini of *La coscienza di Zeno.* They are men who show a tragic moral misery but who find a source of solace in the lucidity of mind with which they analyze themselves.

Una vita relates the vicissitudes of Alfonso Nitti by projecting him against the business life of Trieste. Lost in that busy world, a victim of a love affair, his youth and his conscience crumble. In a moment of weakness he becomes the lover of Annie Maller, the daughter of the wealthy banker by whom he is employed.

In a time of decadence and when the fashion was to glorify eroticism, Svevo objectively analyzed the insincere passion of Nitti and Annie Maller to show all their misery and the inevitability of their parting. That passion reduced Nitti to such a passiveness and listlessness that suicide was the only solution.

In *Senilità* we find the unmasking of a false literary consciousness that, when applied to love, makes Emilio Brentani, a man given to thought and literature, see a vestal in Angiolina, a commonplace girl, who under her beauty hides a corrupted heart. Brentani ascribes to her all the traits of the great women of literature and he seems wholly unaware that through her he is gradually slipping down to vulgarity and degradation. Only the death of his sister, Amalia, an old spinster, whom he neglects, makes him see the true Angiolina. He gives her up and resumes his monotonous life. The old rhetorician, however, is not dead in him. In his mind he transforms Angiolina into Amalia by lending her all the qualities of his saintly sister, and thus he lives in the company of this imaginary being, the embodiment of two personalities wholly contradictory and fantastic, yet very real to him.

La coscienza di Zeno is an autobiography that Zeno Cosini writes for a psychoanalyst to whom he goes for help. In it Zeno analyzes his own passivity and weakness, revealing his weak temperament as reflected by the events of his life.

There is in Svevo the same atmosphere which one finds in all the transition writers of this time. Thomas Hardy's characters readily present themselves to one's mind by way of association. Svevo's characters are suspended between a formalized world of ideals and the actual world of activity, in which new conditions have arisen, which he, like all transitional writers, refuses to accept. The fact that life spells unhappiness and tragedy for their characters testifies to their inability to accept modern life in its new elements, and to give to it a new direction. Their art, however, is deeply human, and out of this feeling of uneasiness before the ever-changing aspects of life they have fashioned great works.

THE NOVEL OF THE NEW GENERATION

THE NOVEL OF THE NEW GENERATION

THE revolt of youth in the early years of our century took the form of a moral rebellion against the extreme Naturalism of Gabriele D'Annunzio, against the gross Materialism of the time, against Positivism and against the false standards that governed the political, social, and moral life of the country. Political events, such as the failure of the colonial policy, social conditions as exemplified in the corruption of public life, the backwardness of culture, and finally the World War, contributed greatly to awaken in the hearts of the younger men the realization that Italian life had to be remoulded into a more spiritual and a loftier structure. The younger men had a clear understanding that their attitude towards life was totally different from that of the past generation. They felt that they had opened a new path for Italian life, and that this path led them further and further from those who were following the old road under the brilliant but artificial light of D'Annunzio's art. In *Il padre e il figlio* ("Father and Son"), 1905, Alfredo Panzini describes the wall that existed between these modern Hamlets and their fathers. In this short story, the father is absorbed by his business and cannot understand the bitter solitude in which his son ruminates upon his ideas. This theme is a common one in the contemporary novel. Federigo Tozzi in *Con gli occhi chiusi* ("With Closed Eyes"), 1919, also presents the hostility that separates his father, a practical innkeeper, and himself, a mystic, sensitive, and tortured soul that is wounded by a vulgarity of which others are not conscious. Speaking of his friends, Piero Jahier, Giovanni Papini, and Scipio

Slataper, Giuseppe Prezzolini writes: "There was in those youths a great need to react against the rhetoric that they felt in the professorial and historical poetry of Carducci and in the mythological poetry of D'Annunzio, glistening with images." [1]

Each generation fashions for itself its own ideal of life, and once again the old and the new were clashing in the fatal rhythm of life. The younger generation no longer understood the grandeur of D'Annunzio, because that grandeur veiled a lack of life-content. The superman, in their eyes, was but an ordinary feeble mortal concealing his inward weakness by the pompous robes of rhetoric. They wanted content, they wanted life and not images; real struggles, spiritual values and not sensual vulgarity beautified by phrases and high-sounding adjectives. Thus, Mario Puccini, a young writer of today, speaks of the literary atmosphere of those years: "It was the time in which many gods dominated our literary horizon. Marvelous and wondrous stories were related about D'Annunzio, a man who galloped in the Roman campagna and sang his dionysiac songs to muses of flesh and bone, ladies of the Roman aristocracy; a man who insulted the soldiers who had died in Africa; a youth with a golden throat, with golden hair, happy and famous for being loved by beautiful women and for the musical resonance of his every word, like the words of the ancient gods and demigods." [2] The new generation thirsted for new truth. "The eyes of the young were searching for something less external, more substantial and more intimately rich. They were searching for a human feeling and a truth from which D'Annunzio had estranged his contemporaries." [3] This was the attitude of the young men towards the literary past embodied in D'Annunzio and his school. It was the revolt of those who were condemned to a bitter solitude by the cult that Italy accorded to its decadent poet. It was a stormy beginning and an interlude of pessimism that darkened the hearts of the young and that recalls the Prometheus-like figures of the *Scapigliatura milanese.* As in the days of declining Romanticism and rising Naturalism, the old ideas were but empty formulae while the new were only timidly dawning in an oppressive mist. The literary annals of the first years of this century are full of rebellious figures torturing themselves in bitter silence or venting their pessimism in gibes and sarcasm. "My soul has grown in the lonely shadows of Siena, isolated, without friendship, deceived every time it asked to be known, and so I often went out at night, avoiding even the street lamps." [4] So confesses Federigo Tozzi in *Bestie,* and this habit of stealing into a deserted night, of avoiding man, of concentrating on one's own thoughts characterizes the writers of today from Pirandello to Papini.

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[1] *Gli Amici*, p. 48.

[2] *De D'Annunzio a Pirandello*, p. 219.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

What impresses one most in studying these new men is the value given by them to the individual. Naturalism had looked at man as a part of the social body and had considered him in relation to society. For the naturalist, life was an entity objectively existing outside of him. Hence, the problem play and the problem novel that discuss the relations of man with his family, with society, with his country, and with the world. In contemporary literature the individual is considered in himself, as an isolated unit, and a microcosm of conflicting tendencies. Contemporary Italian art has embodied in man the contrast that the Greeks expressed in the dualism between Fate and Man, and Naturalism in the contrast between the outside world and man. Even when the hero moves in modern society, he forces his individualism on the surrounding world, isolating himself from it, so that his individualism remains the main fulcrum of the events. With life reduced to this unbreakable monism, it is self-evident that the drama has to revolve about the intellectual adventures and reactions of the individual. Society, Nature, the universe, are merely a screen on which the mental creations of the artist are projected. He intellectualizes even the common events of his daily experience, he looks at them ironically, always detached from them, unable to live them and to grasp the tangibility of sensations and of the universe until he finds a light that redeems life through the spiritual values that he gives to it. "I am alive again," writes Papini in *Un uomo finito*, "but alone, terribly alone, only I. I must recreate a life for myself on new paths, a life wholly mine, a true new life." [5] The problem of the young generation was to give a new moral rhythm to life, and one feels this in reading the works of the representative men of the time.

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[4] Pancrazi, *Ragguagli di Parnaso,* p. 43.

This attitude has brought back sorrow into contemporary literature; sorrow, not in the sense of personal grief, but as a realization of a universal law that fringes the horizon of human existence. With D'Annunzio, as in other epochs of decadence, sorrow had veiled its face before a verbose glorification of an orgiastic joy. A return to the direct study of life is always accompanied by the presence of sorrow. As it produced the pessimism of Foscolo in the early days of Romanticism and the melancholy of Verga in the dawn of Naturalism, so it tinges with tragic feeling the writings of many contemporary authors. With sorrow the human element re-enters the novel. Man ventures into the maze of life, he knows sin and error, passion and vice, weakness and even perversion, but he discovers spiritual problems under them and finds in his own sorrow a moment of supreme illumination. *Dove è il peccato, è Dio* ("Where Sin is, God is") reads the title of a novel by Mario Puccini.

From this attitude there is derived also the keen interest in mysticism that is noticeable in contemporary Italian literature. Giovanni Boine studied the Jansenists and the mystics of Spain. Paolo Orano, after his dream of a messianic Socialism, ended also as a mystic and wrote *La rinascita dell' anima* ("The Rebirth of the Soul"), in 1913. Papini, even in the days of his atheism, went to the mystics of all countries and of all times for solace. "In all I found something which was akin to my soul: elevation, annihilation in God, abandon, hopes of higher destinies." [6]

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[5] *Un uomo finito*, p. 271.

We are singling out of the artistic manifestations of contemporary literature one that seems to be the passion of the new generation: the passion for ideas. We have discovered in the course of our study that, while the literary creed of a past generation goes through a process of disintegration, another rises and battles against it. The present generation has seen the setting of Naturalism and the rising tide of aspirations and dreams of a new movement. We are calling the new tendency Idealism in so far as the leaders have proclaimed the reality of ideas as a challenge to the naturalistic formula: reality in sensation. "We did not need drugs nor champagne," says Giovanni Papini to his friend Giuliano. "Ours was a drunkenness without wine, an orgy without women, a festival without music and balls. It was the exalting daily venturing into the depths of our ego, of our most intimate and true ego, the discovery, the perpetual remoulding of our poetic vision, of our ideas, and the fathoming of intellectual depths." This passion for ideas, not entertained by all with the vehemence of Papini, kindled the heart and glowed in the production of all the new men. Without appreciating it, it is impossible to understand their art. "Do you remember," continues Papini, "how we used to pass, mute and disdainful, haughty, wrapped in our black cloaks, among the tables occupied by good bourgeois families, near the solitary philistines that were dying of ennui, hypnotized by their empty glasses, under the gibes of the fops as vulgar as servants? With what satisfaction we sought our nook to drink our coffee, to recapitulate the conquests of the day, to comment on the past and the future, on the idiotic face of our neighbor and on the hope of heaven! How many books we criticized and destroyed, how many ideas we discovered, how many glories we annihilated, how many systems we took apart!"[7] Papini pictures himself in the *Caffè delle Giubbe Rosse* in Florence, where he and his friends met and vociferously discussed ideas and paradoxes. These discussions, heated and quixotic, have played an important part in the literature of today. The modern heroes share the same terrible logic of Papini and his friends. They dissect ideas, systems, and life. They seek a new life, new ideas, as they realize that life is a continuous birth and constant change.

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[6] *Un uomo finito*, p. 190.

In this literature, there is a tone that reflects that of everyday conversation. Syntax is often offended, as it is in daily speech; stateliness has disappeared; descriptions are obsolete, but there is a fire, a faith, and a youth that compensate for all the mannerisms that have been destroyed. Oblivious of culture and form, men are seeking again an answer to the mystery of life. From this attitude there is derived the subjectiveness of most contemporary literature. Personal confession is the main characteristic of *Il mio Carso* ("My Carso"), 1912, by Scipio Slataper, *Un uomo finito* ("The Failure"), 1912, by Giovanni Papini, *Lemmonio Boreo*, 1912, by Ardengo Soffici, *Ragazzo* ("Childhood"), 1919, by Piero Jahier, *Rubé*, 1921, by Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, and *Verginità* ("Virginity"), 1921, by Fausto Maria Martini.

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The idealistic novel presupposes a new human type with a new outlook on life and a new concept of progress. Two men contributed largely to the moulding of the new generation before the war: Benedetto Croce (born at Pescasseroli,

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[7] *Un uomo finito*, p. 66.

Abruzzi, in 1866) and Giovanni Papini (Florence, 1881). They were the leaders of the two intellectual groups which dominated Italian life in the early years of our century. Croce, although realizing the decadence in which Italy stagnated, believed, together with Guglielmo Ferrero and many others, that the regeneration of the country could be achieved by a gradual evolution. Without dramatic denunciations of his times, he unceasingly worked towards this goal. Papini and his friends believed, on the contrary, in a revolution that would transform Italy into a modern country. Their program was not only literary but sociological and moral as well.

Croce's influence was especially felt before the war. Having opposed Italy's entrance into it in no uncertain terms, he lost contact with the young who turned for leadership to another great mind, Giovanni Gentile.

Croce, however, has had a great influence on the new generation. He is a sworn enemy of rhetoric, of sentimentality, and of any aspiration, no matter how noble, which is not translated into immediate action. He commands the respect and admiration of his contemporaries through the imposing mass of work he has produced rather than through his aesthetic theories. He has delved into archives and has brought to light innumerable documents on Italian literature and history. He has given the younger generation a sense of concreteness and measure that has contributed to the transformation of their mental habits and characteristics. He has taught work which is serious without being passionate, and work that is precise without being meticulous. He has contributed to the modernizing of the Italian language and has created a style of his own, flexible, clear, and direct.

Croce's temperament is best revealed by his magazine, *La Critica*, published since 1903. *La Critica* has stood and stands for a solid and profound culture open to the winds of modern thought and realized through the genial but strict and well-defined critical method of Croce.

The lasting monuments to his methodical and genial work, however, are the seventy-odd volumes in which he has analyzed not only Italian literature from Dante to contemporary writers but also English, French, Spanish, and German literatures. He has the gift of seizing with unfaltering directness the central problem of the artist and of reconstructing around it all the development of his art.

All the men of the new generation owe much to him. Borgese, Papini, Boine, and Prezzolini formed their minds under the influence of Croce. Soon, however, they began to feel the difference that existed between the great master of the past generation and themselves, and they rebelled. The controversies first between Croce and Papini, later between Croce and Borgese, constitute an interesting chapter in the intellectual life of the new Italy. It was first of all a question of temperament. Croce, Olympian and serene; Papini and Borgese, restless and passionate. Croce, an indefatigable but calm worker; Papini, an erratic writer, passing from one interest to another, contradictory, violent, at times plebeian. It was, above all, the difference in their conception of spirit. Religion, for instance, has for Croce an historical character and it seems to merge into philosophy. For Papini and Borgese, religion is the mystic experience of the individual, as evidenced by the fact that today both are professed believers.

The difference became more patent in the aesthetic field. Croce reduced (at least theoretically) the whole poetic activity of a writer to his lyric transformation of reality. This lyricism seemed to clash with the new thirst of the young who sought mainly content in art. They gradually saw it resolve itself into the very hedonism that they endeavored to eradicate from the Italian temperament. When Croce called D'Annunzio a great artist and underrated both Pascoli and Fogazzaro, the young could no longer follow him. Croce remained intrenched behind his greatness and theories; the young went roaming into the various fields of literature in search of intellectual adventures.

Giovanni Papini has been the most conspicuous leader of the new generation. From 1903 to 1914 he filled the hearts of the young men with a maddening desire for self-expression, for a new consciousness, and for a new art. He has revealed to them the passion for ideas by showing them the drama of his own turbulent intellect. Renato Fondi, a man of the new generation, expresses in this manner his reaction to Papini's writings in the magazine, *Il Leonardo:* "The reading of *Il Leonardo* reconciled me to life. I found faith and health. Energy produced energy. Among them [the contributors to the magazine] was Gian Falco [Papini's pen name], against whom was written all sorts of slander. Yet he could dwarf with one stroke many a man unjustly celebrated. He promised more restful and luminous horizons, spiritual adventures more serious and difficult. . . . For him to live was to remake the world." [8]

Papini's youth passed in an exasperated hatred for the past which, according to him, stifled the present. He wanted his country to forget the past, "to be daring and revolutionary, and to break the Chinese walls of cultural isolation." [9] He shouted that in Italy they had depended too long upon the greatness of the past and had copied the masterpieces of the old masters too often. The time had come for originality and creation. According to Papini, modern art presupposes a new consciousness, a new sensibility, a new spirit, a new outlook on life, a new style. Italian intellectual life had been weighed down by rules and exaggerated worship of the past from the Sixteenth Century down to our own days. The young must focus their attention on the actual world, look at it directly without thinking what an old master would feel and say. In his

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[8] *Un costruttore*, p. 25–26.

[9] *Esperienza futurista*, p. 93.

Esperienza futurista, he incites the new generation to an absolute mad liberty which is not to be confused with lack of discipline and isolated rebellion. For him, revolution is a collective effort and implies profound and passionate faith and blind discipline. This was the belligerent tone and these were the new ideas with which Italy of today challenged the past and envisioned the future.

The important feature of this attitude lay in the fact that art was looked upon as an integral part of modern life, and the revolutionary changes had to involve the whole national structure.

The great contribution of Papini as a master was his teaching that the inner life of man is a constant outgrowing of ideas and that to really live one must be on an endless search for an always changing basis. To him, more than to anyone else, we owe the fact the Italian culture emerged from its isolation. He introduced to Italy modern thinkers such as William James, Bergson, and Boutroux. He showed examples of new poetry in Walt Whitman and Tanko, the negro poet. Restless, untiring, practical, he knew how to reach the upper strata of the intelligentsia as well as intelligent people at large. Nothing and no one daunted him, and the public square and the theatre (Croce would never have done this) heard the new gospel of Italian rebirth.

The new era was ushered in by this quixotic leader in the same way that Romanticism had had its radiating center in Milan and Naturalism had blossomed in the primitive soil of Sicily. In Florence, in fact, were published *Il Leonardo* and *Lacerba* by Papini and *La Voce* by Prezzolini, magazines representing three distinct literary groups and moods.

The first of these groups was that of *Il Leonardo* (1903–1908). It used to meet in the *Caffè delle Giubbe Rosse* in Florence, where Papini, Prezzolini, Costetti, Spadini, Vailati, and Calderoni discussed their ideas, always in search of new writers, of new poets, and of new systems. It was through this group that William James's Pragmatism became known in Italy and it was responsible for *Il Crepuscolo dei filosofi* ("The Twilight of the Philosophers"), 1906, and *Pragmatismo* ("Pragmatism"), 1913, by Papini, a daring and original remoulding of the American movement that called forth the praises of William James himself.

This philosophical stage was followed by an artistic one that crystallized into *La Voce* under the leadership of Giuseppe Prezzolini. The best intellectual energies, Papini, Salvemini, Borgese, Gentile, Murri, Anile gathered together in this group. Every vital problem attracted their attention and was discussed in the periodical *La Voce*, published from 1909 to 1918. Social and political questions like those of southern Italy and the Lybian War found an echo in the columns of *La Voce*, discussed by the socialist Gaetano Salvemini. Gentile revealed through it his faith in the spirit, battling against the positivistic conception of life entertained by Lombroso. Borgese protested against Guglielmo Ferrero, showing what a gap existed between the conception of history of the past generation and that of the new one. Anile wrote in it the first chapter of what has since been the reform of schools carried out by Gentile. In 1912, Salvemini left the group and founded a magazine of his own, *L'Unità*. Papini also deserted in 1914 and joined the Futurists, publishing *Lacerba*, the expression of the most turbulent and spasmodic stage of his intellectual life. There still remains the *Libreria della Voce* that publishes the most audacious of the new books.

During and after the war both Croce and Papini relinquished the intellectual leadership to another great man and thinker, Giovanni Gentile, born in Castelvetrano, Sicily, 1875. Gentile is the representative thinker of Italy today. He has been sympathetic with the young in the same measure that Croce kept himself aloof from them. Croce, financially independent, always lived in the urbane solitude of his home in Naples, while Gentile, a typical professor with a large family, moved from one university to another, sharing the difficulties and understanding the problems of modern youth.

Giovanni Gentile, although he does not pretend to be such, is a mystic, or, since an idea represents reality in the field of spiritual values, a realistic mystic. As one listens to him presenting his ideas to his pupils in the University of Rome, one is won over by the flame of genuine enthusiasm which emanates from his words. To him, all reality reduces itself to thought, to an active thought which excludes all abstractions and in which one feels the passing of the Deity. The difference between Croce's and Gentile's temperament is especially felt in aesthetics. For Croce, art is the lyric expression of a writer, which is a variation of the doctrine of art for art's sake, while for Gentile art is inherently moral, since it is a manifestation of the spirit and there is an indivisible unity among all its manifestations. In their dispute in the columns of *La Voce* they battled for a new conception of art which showed very clearly the respective attitudes of the two great thinkers towards the different problems of modern times. Gentile has exercised a great influence on Italian culture through his numberless journal and magazine articles on philosophy, art, and history.

Another man who has had a deep influence on contemporary Italian literature is Giuseppe Prezzolini, born in Perugia, 1882, a man of calmer temperament than his friend Papini and possessed of more reserve and self-control. In the columns of *Il Leonardo*, where he signed himself Giuliano il Sofista, and later in those of *La Voce*, he has followed and analyzed the intellectual movements of our times with the serenity of a man who is above all faiths and systems.

He made Croce known, interpreted the anti-nationalism of Salvemini, assayed the living part of Modernism, followed with keen interest the new philosophy of spirit of Gentile. Through the gift of a lucid intellect and a style that adheres completely to his thoughts, he clarified problems in all these movements which were not wholly clear to the leaders themselves. Croce would never have achieved his popularity without Prezzolini, and many modern movements and groups would have remained unknown. Prezzolini has defined himself as "an impresario of culture," and no national movement, literary or political, has escaped his searching but urbane analysis.

We have dwelt on these men because through the study of their activity and thought we can picture the condition of Italian culture since the beginning of our century. The fiction that we are about to study developed against the background of the artistic atmosphere which these men helped to create.

V

THE NOVEL OF IDEAS: THE GROUP OF LA VOCE

THE intellectual activity stimulated especially by the group of *La Voce* produced a novel which, because of its dialectic basis, we have chosen to call "The Novel of Ideas." In it we witness the flight towards the realm of thought of a group of men who limited their whole life to intellectual interests. It is a production intensely personal, which partakes of the nature of a diary in which the bodily and emotional sides of the artist are almost totally forgotten in the desire to enhance the intellectual one. This fiction is naturally abstract but it has produced a great many novels that have struck a new note in the history of Italian literature by giving to it a keen interest in ideas, an interest that, in the provincialism of the naturalistic novel, had seldom appeared.

Giovanni Papini is the outstanding figure in this group and near him we notice many of the youths who belonged to the group of *La Voce*, such as Ardengo Soffici, Piero Jahier, Giovanni Boine, Scipio Slataper, and Massimo Bontempelli.

GIOVANNI PAPINI

(Florence, 1881–)

We have already discussed Giovanni Papini, the polemist and intellectual leader who helped to form a new literary atmosphere in Italy in the early years of our century. In him, however, the polemical and intellectual activities coincide with his creative instinct. He offers to us the drama of a man who passionately and almost furiously seeks a unity for his intellectual life. We have in his books the tormented existence of an individual who discards all creeds, analyzes all faiths, and reads voraciously all books in his quest of an absolute truth. He, too, had the malady of the infinite, of which he had to cure himself before finding his real self. He tells us, referring to the time of his youth, "My mind sought universal concepts as the only food which might appease its hunger."[1]

His fiction is a document of two distinct phases of his life: one, in which he destroys all that comes within his reach, tradition, philosophy, religion; the other, dating from *Un uomo finito* ("The Failure"), 1912, in which he finds a concrete basis for his thought together with a sense of harmony and repose.

The first period of Papini's fiction is characterized by restlessness and torment, and it coincides with the period of his youth in the days of *La Voce* and when he joined the Futurists, only to desert them and to go on his quest alone. This was also the time in which he published *Il crepuscolo dei filosofi* ("The Twilight of the Philosophers"), 1906, in which he attacked the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, Spencer, and Schopenhauer, as they failed to give him what he sought in them: an ultimate answer about life. It was an almost satanical Papini, outspoken, always daring and violent, outwardly insolent, even plebeian, but inwardly passionate and tremendously serious.

There was a bitter struggle in him at this time. Life, art, and thought appeared to him as the result of two forces: tradition and revolution, order and disorder. Without tradition, the conquests of revolution would be lost, but there would be no conquest without revolution and individual creation. Art had become a deformation of the actual reality through imitation and only a revolution could bare again the sources of creative art. Hence his belief in an unbridled individualism and his antagonism to every sort of tradition.

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[1] *Un uomo finito*, p. 70.

This turbulent mood of the writer finds expression in *Il tragico quotidiano* ("The Tragedy of Every Day"), 1906; *Memorie d'Iddio* ("Memoirs of God"), 1911; *Parole e sangue* ("Words and Blood"), 1912, in which famous characters of literature, like Hamlet, Don Juan, the Wandering Jew, the Devil, are reanalyzed. Papini, who was violently personal, saw himself in them and, therefore, he presents them violent, paradoxical, but supremely logical. These characters are best described by one of them: "I am not a real man. I am not a man like all others; a man of flesh and blood, a man born for men. . . . I am, and I want to say it, although perhaps you will not believe me, I am only the embodiment of a dream,"[2] the intellectual dream and speculations of Papini.

In these short stories there is neither action nor development in plot. Yet with all their abstraction, they are new and powerful. There is ever present in them the tormented, lucid, logical intellect of Papini, who has reduced his whole existence to thinking.

The masterpiece of Papini and one of the greatest books of modern times is *Un uomo finito*, in which the author autobiographically recants the stormy days of his early youth. In it Papini rejects his former abstractness and fashions for himself a eurhythmical vision of life in which the past and the present, tradition and creative instinct, are harmonized. The book goes beyond the reach of a personal biography. It is the history of a generation that lived too much in abstractions and needed again the close contact with the spiritual realities of life in order to find itself. In this novel there is the drama of old intellectual Europe steeped in the creed of Positivism that Papini has outgrown. "I was submerged in facts, but facts were not sufficient for me. No matter how many I fathomed and put together, they did not satisfy the infinite in me."[3] Had not facts been the great concern of positivistic science? Had not Papini sought in it the answer to the enigma of life? He confesses, "My intellect asked from life its reason and it received no answer."[4] Papini goes now to the soil, to the country of Tuscany, for liberation. After this sustained confession of his intellectual torments he cries, "I am not a metaphysical and absolute man, suspended in the atmosphere of concepts. I was born at a given place, I belong to a given race, I have behind me a history and a tradition. To find myself means to regain contact with my native land, with my people, with the culture whence I derived."[5] With enthusiasm in which there glows a genuine flame, Papini tells us of the beauty of the Tuscan country, of its austere lines in which the dark firs rise like stately thoughts, of its intimacy, and of its strength.

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[2] *Il tragico quotidiano*, p. 85.

In this country he rediscovers his own soul. He grows to understand the very nature of the art of the great Florentines: "The strength of Dante, the dry conciseness of Machiavelli, the awe-inspiring art of Michelangelo, the curiosity of Leonardo, the penetrating mind of Galileo."[6]

Un uomo finito marks a moment of conquest and harmony in Papini's life. What he published later shows a man who has found a sense of intimate calm in the realm of nature and in the religion of his fathers as well as in the literary tradition of Florence. The lyrical treatment of nature in *Giorni di festa* ("Days of Rejoicing"), 1918, and in *Cento pagine di poesia* ("A Hundred Pages of Poetry"), 1919, shows Papini's return to the contemplation of the Tuscan country, and a sense of communion with nature and with the creatures of the field. *La vita di Cristo* ("Life of Christ"), 1921, allows us to see a Papini who finds refuge

[3] *Un uomo finito*, p. 70.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

from the tormented searchings of his intellect in his religious belief.

Giovanni Papini, in spite of much adverse criticism, remains one of the most important figures of contemporary Italy. He stands out as an original and passionate thinker and as one of those who opened a new path for Italian literature by giving to fiction a philosophical basis.

ARDENGO SOFFICI

(Rignano sull' Arno, 1879–)

Ardengo Soffici resembles Papini in many respects. They fought the same battles, at the time of the *La Voce* Society, they shared the same ideas, although Soffici leaned toward pure art while Papini was more of a philosopher. They had in common, however, a tormented outlook on life which Soffici declared "a continuous bankruptcy."

Soffici returned to Italy from Paris, where he had studied painting, and brought back with him an ardent desire for novelty. He joined the Futurists and often accompanied their leader, Marinetti, in the latter's grotesque campaigns in favor of Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, and all the other "isms" sponsored by the Futurists. No one was in reality more remote from that movement than Soffici who is a genuine artist with an exquisite sense of beauty. His charm lies in the freshness with which he can render a cloud, a patch of blue sky, a flower, a cool stream. He is a pure artist, a man who discovers beauty and interest in everything he sees. He transports into his books his very sensations before the various aspects of Nature, and with the same directness he sketches an odd man or a queer-looking woman on whom his ironical eyes have rested for a moment.

There are in his writings, however, traces of the tumultuous intellectual times of *La Voce*. Soffici has followed the same line of development as Papini, which is after all the development of ardent and unbridled minds. From the turbulence of his early literary experience he has returned to tradition to find in it a sense of serenity and inner harmony. In 1912, Soffici published a novel, *Lemmonio Boreo*, in which the author presented himself in a youthful idealist who returns home after spending many years abroad. After choosing as collaborators two companions of questionable reputation, he decides to correct the many wrongs that he finds in his country.

There are many elements of Don Quixote in *Lemmonio Boreo*, but the latter is an hidalgo born in Tuscany and is abundantly supplied with the mobile and ironical mind of the typical Florentine. Indeed, the cold objectiveness of Lemmonio makes one doubt the fervor and earnestness of the reformer. The moral weakness of the novel is revealed by the crude and even vulgar conduct of both Zuccagna and Spillo, his companions, to the point of making one wonder whether what these would-be reformers do is not as bad as the wrongs which they wish to remedy. In a novel that proposes reforms, an ethical belief is indispensable. Here, on the contrary, all actions of accusers and accused stagnate in the same lack of ethical principles.

The novel is mediocre, and only here and there do we get a glimpse of the true Soffici. The fact is that the author has been unable to give to Lemmonio Boreo the concreteness of thought required in a reformer. Nor has he succeeded in investing him with the undertone of genuine sadness which is hidden beneath the whims of the author.

Soffici was more successful in a later book called *Arlecchino* ("Harlequin"), 1914, a collection of essays dating back to the time of *La Voce*. There is in it life lived through Soffici's eyes, but under the color and the light of the Tuscan landscape there is the melancholy of the modern man. Like Papini, Soffici finds in thought a guide to loneliness and isolation. He, too, searches for a basis for modern thought that once found its fulcrum in religion. Modern man does not have for him the comfort of religion, and hence he wanders in life in the company of his own melancholy.

The book consists in a succession of bits of life on which the author muses, weaving into them his philosophy and lyric moods. It is all made of the impressions, delicate and subtle, with which the author reacts to life. It is the dissecting of a moment of passion, as in two short stories dealing with the misery of fickleness—*Misteri spiccioli* ("Tiny Mysteries") and *Chiacchiere* ("Idle Chat").

In *Misteri spiccioli* the protagonist is at a loss to understand why he should feel attracted toward a girl of the lower classes who tempts him with her sensual beauty. "I often ask myself what I want from her and she from me; what these fleeting contacts without climax mean, and I cannot give myself a reasonable answer. When I am in a good humor I think, 'Oh, life is so short, so transient.' But when I look at things more seriously, I despise myself."[7] *Chiacchiere* is one of the finest and most original treatments of the theme of love in contemporary literature. It is a dialogue between two lovers who analyze their own weakness. They are brutally sincere and they penetrate a region, shadowy and mysterious, which is never attained by the usual formal treatment of the love theme.

Soffici had something this time that consoled him for his philosophical and sentimental pessimism—his power to feel the beauty of nature. His gloomy mood is invariably ended by the charm of the perfume and the beauty of a flower, by clouds pursued by the wind on a spring morning, or by the steel-like lucidity of water stagnating in the newly ploughed fields. The book begins: "I, Menalio, the victim of three tragedies—philosophical, sentimental, and financial—have seen this morning the face of happiness. The sun struck my eyes when I awoke."[8] The constant passing from the uncertainty of thought to the sure possession of the beauty of a bit of nature permeates the book, and it soothes Soffici's sadness about life.

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[7] *Arlecchino*, p. 47.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

This period of uncertainty was followed by one of rebellion also parallel to that of Papini, whom Soffici joined in editing the magazine *Lacerba* in the days of their futurism. Soffici's turbulent state of mind is reflected in *Giornale di bordo* ("The Ship's Log"), 1915, which is as violent, paradoxical, and desperate as was the life of the author at that time. We read: "If I were by chance to commit suicide, put on my tomb this epitaph—Killed by the bankruptcy of philosophy." [9] And again, "Optimism, Pessimism. What do they mean? Life is an overpowering current without direction, without cause, which goes on, breaking and destroying the dykes that we attempt to oppose to it with our moral systems, with our distinctions between good and evil, with our conventions and paltry utilitarianism. It is a magnificent and terrible gift from no one knows whom, and, as the French say: '*C'est à prendre ou à laisser.*'" [10]

It is hard to find any constructive element in this diary that records Soffici's intellectual moods. It is a violent attack on authority of all sorts, warring against the bourgeois conception of life, criticizing the accepted masters of art and literature. One constantly feels in it the clear-cut personality of Soffici in his sudden moods of joy and gloom, in all his humanity, serious and sincere. Here, too, nature is his only solace, but very rarely does it appear to relieve his sadness and torment.

He jots down in his diary: "January 24th. Benedetto Croce, reputed to be a daring mind, is very conservative, he is ultimately a bourgeois, a bomb charged with common sense." [11] Also: "August 2nd. Today, when no one, or almost no one, believes in Paradise, God has been replaced by money. Money has taken, and justly so, the place of the Deity." [12] But nature relieves his tension and bitterness: "In this moment my heart is full of tenderness, even of love, for a poor toad that every evening comes to sing under my window; every evening his monotonous song is humble and soft like the notes of a flute, and he sings timidly in the dark, hidden in the cold grass of the fields." [13]

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[9] *Giornale di bordo*, p. 13.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Soffici found himself in the World War. If we disregard a brief novel of this period, called *La giostra dei sensi* ("The Tournament of the Senses"), 1919, Soffici's production reveals a deep moral concern that was unknown to him before he went to the trenches. *La giostra dei sensi* is an objective study of a young Neapolitan girl, Lina, one of society's outcasts, with whom the author has had a short-lived adventure while on a furlough from the firing-line. It testifies to Soffici's Bohemian character and shows his blunt sincerity, but it is in sharp contrast with his new mood brought about by the war. Soffici went to the firing-line, was wounded twice, and found in war a new intellectual and moral life. The war reconciled him with Italy, with the people, and even with the bourgeois whom he despised and ridiculed in *Giornale di bordo*. *Kolibeck* (named after an Alpine peak), 1918, registers Soffici's war experiences. He expresses in it the moral sense that he discovered in the sacrifice of a people at war. If we compare this book with those that preceded it, we see that what Soffici's thought lacked was an ethical consciousness, the absence of which made useless all desire for spiritual growth. That is the reason why his reforms were merely the sterile longings of a dilettante. Soffici was afraid or incapable of facing the moral issue. In *Kolibeck* the moral issues occupy the foreground and, accompanied by the freshness with which Soffici feels and presents people and events, it creates a truly human and harmonious work.

Today Soffici is a most ardent supporter of tradition. In painting, in which he excels and has an international reputation, he has returned to the technique of the old Italian masters. In 1920 he founded a magazine, *Rete Mediterranea* ("The Net of the Mediterranean"), on the pages of which he continues to delight the reader with his sketches and philosophical musings. He is justly proud of having intoduced into Italy this literary fashion.

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[12] *Giornale di bordo*, p. 159.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

PIERO JAHIER

(GENOA, 1884–)

Another writer of the *La Voce* group was Piero Jahier, who went to Florence from the Valdensian Valley bringing with him a stern Calvinistic sense of duty. A tragic event saddened his childhood: his father, a Valdensian clergyman, overcome by remorse for having been untrue to his wife, committed suicide. Piero Jahier inherited the sensitive nature of his father, but he also learned from his friends of *La Voce* the bitter solace of sarcasm, which he vented in his autobiographical novel, *Resultanze in merito alla vita e al carattere di Gino Bianchi* ("An Appraisal of the Life and Character of Gino Bianchi"), 1912. In this novel he gave a caricature of bureaucracy as he saw it, while earning his living as clerk in a small railroad station in order to support his family. The book reflected his reaction against the hardships of life, imposed on him, his mother, and his three brothers by his father's suicide.

The work caricatures Gino Bianchi, the embodiment of a machine-like employe with whom he contrasts himself, a poet, compelled to stagnate in the dullness of an office. No light falls on this monotonous existence, no love, no faith, no solace, just the bitter power of humor as death darkened his youth. He felt life like an iron cloak on him and with the feeling of personal oppression there was mingled that of the Valdensian mountaineers, isolated from the rest of the country by their form of religion, silent and stern like the Alps themselves.

When the war came, Jahier enlisted in the army and found in it his liberation as he regained his faith in men and in history. His irony changed to compassion and sympathy, and the true Jahier revealed himself in a new art. *Ragazzo* ("Childhood"), 1919, gives us the poetry of Jahier's childhood, sad but resigned. *Con me e con gli Alpini* ("With me and with the Soldiers of the Alps"), 1919, recollections of the war, is one of the greatest contemporary Italian books. All of Jahier is there in his love and faith for the people whose heroism and sense of sacrifice he admires. He sketches humble figures, like that of Private Luigi Somacal, who stands out against the snow-capped mountains as a symbol of the people and an expression of Jahier's moral sentiment before the indifference of society for the lower classes. Somacal is dull of wit, but Jahier discovers in him such qualities of devotion and of nobility of heart as to renew in the disconsolate writer his faith in Italy and in the world.

The book marks progress in the development of Jahier. His moral and religious sentiment has the opportunity of freely expanding while he is among the people and the artisans. He listens to miners, peasants, stone-cutters, cart drivers, who in the lull between battles relate to him how they lived at home. There is humor and especially there is pathos as Jahier contrasts the simplicity and charm of life in the days of peace with the tragic existence of wartime. Jahier finds the country's honor reflected in those humble soldiers, and they become for him a source of courage and the symbol of a new life.

GIOVANNI BOINE

(Finalmarina, Genoa, 1887–Porto Maurizio, 1917)

Giovanni Boine was a solitary youth with mystical aspirations, whose mind was constantly bent on the religious side of man, in spite of the rationalistic trend of modern thought. Life did not grant him joys of any sort. Unhappy at home, despondent over the conditions of modern life, isolated by his melancholy temperament that did not allow him the satirical outbursts of Papini, he found his only comfort in his spiritual life. He devoted himself to the study of mysticism and wrote both in the *Rinnovamento*, the modernistic review of Milan, and in *La Voce*. Later he contributed to the *Riviera Ligure*, a small magazine of Oneglia, near Genoa, where, suffering from tuberculosis, he went to live. Under the title of *Plausi e botte* ("Applause and Blows"), he analyzed the new books and studied the trend of modern Italian literature.

In his *Frantumi* ("Fragments"), published posthumously in 1918, a book written with the very life which was slowly ebbing from him, he wrote: "For days of sadness we need a sweetheart who gives us serenity, who tells us of the things of Spring. That makes us forget. That is why my sweetheart is Solitude."[14] He was, in fact, a solitary man and filled his solitude at times with his dreams, but chiefly with his gloom. But suddenly there gleams in his confessions a ray of joy and of hope that was hidden by his melancholy smile. He writes: "As for the day, this light is excessive. I flutter my wings in it like an owl. Here and there men and things move in a merry masquerade. I clash with them as if against sharp edges. . . . All bruised and in anguish, I seek thus a nook and deserted streets. I pass my day longing for the night. But at night, when I am alone—who cares to keep vigil with me?—every wound is unbandaged. The night grants me darkness so that my spectral face may not be seen, and it grants me sleep that I may not feel. But with many desires quivers the dawn, always rising anew!"[15]

Boine used the experiences of his mystical youth to write a novel, *Il peccato* ("Sin"), 1914, in which sin is used as a means of reaching a wider and more concrete sense of

[14] *Frantumi*, p. 50.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

life. "At eighteen years," he tells of the hero, "he read the mystics and passionately disputed dogmas."[16] The youth in the story lived in a small industrial town where no one understood him except a few individuals whom society branded as abnormal. His life was all in his thoughts. He knew a young nun, Suor Teresa, who played the harmonium and sang beautifully, expressing in her music the regret for the world that she had unwillingly relinquished. She left the convent for him, causing great scandal in the little town.

The central part of the novel is the growth of the sheltered and introspective youth through his love affair. Through sin, he knows life and better understands himself. He acquires sympathy for and understanding of all other men who live in a normal way, or, as the young thinker used to say, "in sin." Through sin he has broken the traditions of those who lived outside the tumult of life, but through it he has also known the value and power of the everyday life.

Excessive abstractness spoils the novel, as characters and events lack that clear-cut contour that we admire in truly great fiction. Yet it is a good example of analysis in which we come to know the intellectual life of an introspective youth. If we put aside narrow classifications, we can regard the lyric prose of *Frantumi* and *Il peccato* as pure fiction, and we shall find in it the drama of a tragic existence and of a sensitive and tormented soul.

SCIPIO SLATAPER

(TRIESTE, 1888; DIED IN THE WORLD WAR, 1915)

Scipio Slataper, author of *Il mio Carso* ("My Carso"—a mountain near Trieste), 1912, also belongs to this group. A handsome young giant, with clear blue eyes and a thoughtful, sensitive soul, such appeared Slataper to those who knew him in his university days and such he lives in his writings.

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[16] *Il peccato*, p. 103.

Born of an Italian mother and a Slavic father, he left Trieste, at that time under Austrian rule, and went to Florence where he joined the group of *La Voce*. He devoted himself to criticism, and his studies of Ibsen and of German literature show the lyric and interpretative side of his mind. He admired, rather than shared, the intellectualism of men like Papini and Soffici, but in spite of his contacts he never experienced their restlessness and intellectual torments.

Il mio Carso, 1912, is the confession of a man who finds his own soul in the open realm of nature, stately and serene. He confesses to his friends of *La Voce*, "I look at you astonished and detached, and feel timid before your culture and your reasoning. I am, perhaps, afraid of you. I blush and become silent, sitting quietly at the corner of my table, and I think of the consolation of the tall trees, open to the wind." [17] The consoling feeling that modern man derives from nature is the chief motif of *Il mio Carso*. It is a significant book, for in it we come to know a man who, even in the midst of the complex modern civilization, never lost the sense of a primitive and virgin life.

Although not strictly fiction, *Il mio Carso* shows the pensive mood of the new generation, in that nature is no longer used for descriptive purposes, but it forms a sort of screen on which the writer has projected his musings on the theme of life.

His sketches, published posthumously by his friend, Giani Stuparich, 1920, remind one of the style of Soffici. He, too, lingers on the description of odd and characteristic figures, but he is more intellectual, since he does not apprehend the outer world, like Soffici, mostly through his eyes. Slataper is endowed with an exquisite sensitiveness that allows him to drift to lands of imagination and dreams where his weariness and feeling of dissatisfaction cease. "I long for distant legends and for glory. Perhaps I should like to return to my far-away country. I should like to return to my tranquil and harmonious country. I need to rest in a transparent thicket of oak trees . . . I long to touch the young flesh of a virgin. I wish to flow down with the river like a breath of wind on the flowery slope." [18]

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[17] *Il mio Carso*, p. 10.

The earth is alive for him, it has the feeling of something human. "I feel the nude trunks of the trees vibrate. The roots writhe while clinging to the hard earth. The ruinous torrents dig into my flesh." [19] He jots down in his *Monologhi primaverili* ("Spring Monologues") what a stone and a laurel-tree tell him, and he listens through them to the voices of the universe and his youth.

Slataper is the most modern of the group of *La Voce* and he is the one who offers the greatest solidity of ideas. He possesses a creative mind, and both in his criticism, *Scritti letterari e politici* ("Literary and Political Writings"), 1920, and in his autobiographical writings, he constantly aims at a constructive outlook on life.

MASSIMO BONTEMPELLI

(Como, 1885–)

Massimo Bontempelli is one of the most promising writers of modern times. He has taken an active part in most of the literary movements of our day and he is looked upon as a leader by a group of younger writers like Corrado Alvaro, Antonio Aniante, and others.

Bontempelli began his literary career as a disciple of Carducci; later he deserted to the Futurists and finally abandoned them to create for himself an art of his own which is outwardly humorous, but tragic and pessimistic in its essence. He characterizes thus his art: "I do not relate a fact, but rather a development of thought. I am like a mathematician who excludes the tangible dimensions of bodies and only focuses his attention upon developing the formulae of their dimensions." [20] Bontempelli is, above all, a logician and a mathematician. He usually bases his stories on a given idea, which he states in clear but paradoxical terms and from which he derives fantastic consequences. These, although absurd, are logical so long as they are made to spring from previously stated axioms. Bontempelli's humor is reflected in these absurd consequences stretching into infinite possibilities.

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[18] *Scritti letterari e politici*, p. 121.

[19] *Ibid.* p. 122.

This statement, however, does not explain why Bontempelli feels compelled to rise towards the realm of paradoxes, nor does it determine the cause of the abstractness of his characters. To us, Bontempelli is another rebel against the relative conditions of the actual life. He refuses to accept everyday prose as the sum total of life, and consequently he rises towards the wide horizons of imagination. Logic is the means he uses to attain the heights towards which he aspires. As a consequence of this, his characters are highly intellectual. Indeed, they are logical maniacs, who, through excessive thinking, are unable to live on this prosaic earth.

We find, in Bontempelli, the same attitude towards life as in Pirandello and in Borgese, as he, too, believes that too much thinking cools and destroys the natural warmth of sentiment and emotions. Like Rubè, who destroyed himself through his inexorable logic, Bontempelli's characters, by attempting to reason out life and happiness, find themselves face to face with the same dead end: the blank wall of death or of unspeakable disillusion.

This theme runs through one of Bontempelli's most characteristic books: *I sette savi* ("The Seven Wise Men"), 1912, a book which represents his sense of the "relative" in the days when *La Voce* tried to destroy the fog of abstraction in Italian intellectual life. Eutichio, the first of the seven wise men who are introduced to the reader in their attempt to solve the riddle of human happiness, is the most typical of Bontempelli's characters. One is struck by his intellectualism. Eutichio has lived to the age of twenty-seven like any other normal individual, when, suddenly, he decides to find a certain and categorical formula for happiness. He focuses his attention on possessing and enjoying everything in a happy medium. This idea governs henceforth Eutichio's life and it determines the development of the story. Eutichio tries to apply the criterion of the happy medium to every detail of his existence, of his profession and of his clothing. He discusses the question whether life in the city is happier than life in the country, and he comes to the conclusion that life in the suburbs is the happy medium. He asks himself which is the most suitable means of locomotion to a man who is in the pursuit of happiness. "A wise man must know how to find the happy medium between ancient and modern vehicles. I sold my automobile, closed my villa and went [by train, we presume] to the seaside at Ladispoli, since it was July." [21] All these changes in his life do not bring happiness. Like an elusive but bewitching mirage, happiness tantalizes him until old, tired, penniless, sick, he decides to die. For this purpose he goes to the top of the Milan cathedral and there, before taking the fatal leap, he ponders over his adventurous life when suddenly he comes upon the geometrical axiom: every point of an infinite line is the medium point of the same line. This fills him with exhilaration and he realizes in his thoughts the happiness that he had sought in his actual existence. Eutichio applies this axiom to his life and to life in general. He concludes: "The road to happiness is an infinite line. So every man *is*, in *every* moment of his life, always and perfectly happy."[22] Thereupon he leaps to his death, leaving his discovery as a heritage to the world.

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[20] *I sette savi*, p. 40.

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[21] *I sette savi*, p. 27.

After the publication of *I sette savi*, there followed a very disturbed period in which Bontempelli linked himself with the Futurists. That disorderly and bitter mood, enhanced by the World War, lasted a long time and is reflected in *La vita intensa* ("The Intense Life"), 1919, a collection of stories in which the distressed mind of the author tries to forget itself by not thinking. It is the triumph of a painful idiocy that can be explained only by the effect of the war on the author. It is not possible to say anything specific about these stories, as they do not mean anything and are not intended to mean anything.

Quite different, although humorous, is *La vita operosa* ("The Active Life"), 1921, in which the author relates his adventures in the business world of Milan, which he entered after leaving the army. The speculative and dialectic trend of *I sette savi* reappears here and puts an end to the meaningless events related in *La vita intensa.* Since the author was then a business man and since, in modern times, we have the most extraordinary kinds of business, the fertile imagination of Bontempelli creates the strangest situations, affording a comic picture of the modern business world. The picture is somewhat unfinished and the reader has to add to it the mental and spiritual disappointment of the author in order to derive a full meaning from it. Let one example suffice. In his peregrinations about Milan, Bontempelli meets, during a clash between Socialists and Fascists, an individual who kindly invites him to his boarding house. He follows him there and meets some very peculiar persons, among whom is Donna Irene, the mistress of the house, who introduces the author to two gentlemen, her first and second husbands. The author is at first frightened, as he thinks he is in the presence of a ghost, but Pietro, the first husband, in shaking hands with him, reassures him through the contact of his chubby hand. When he recovers his self-possession, the author is told by Donna Irene: "My husband had a friend, Giulio, who was a bachelor and had a large apartment, the one in which we live. Naturally I divorced Pietro and married Giulio." [23]

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[22] *I sette savi*, p. 43.

In this boarding house, so the author relates, very strange conversations are heard. When a door suddenly squeaks, Pietro, the husband, a practical man, remarks that it needs a few drops of oil, but the romantic Donna Irene softly says, "It seems to lament its bereavement." [24] What a far-fetched remark, worthy of Lilly or of Marino, the reader may say, and he will be still more surprised when Gionata, the kind gentleman who took Bontempelli to the boarding house, says, "Your remark, Donna Irene, compels me to focus my attention again on one of the problems which for some time have been torturing my intellect. And it is this: If a door had senses and sentiment, and hence fantasy and desire, would it prefer to stay closed or open?" [25] He offers his metaphysical explanation and we listen to further discussions of this abstract sort until Bontempelli, having in his conversation mentioned the war, is made to pay the fine of two bottles of champagne. Those people had decided to indulge in metaphysical thoughts and had banished even the mention of war in a frantic effort to free themselves of the nightmare of the European tragedy. The author is told: "You must know that here it is forbidden to talk about the present conditions of life." [26]

Apparently the fiction of this period is very light and gay; actually there is a strong undercurrent of thought which under the form of a cynical smile ripples all over the book. It is harder to get at this substratum of grieving thought in Bontempelli than in other writers to whom this humorist bears resemblance. In Panzini, for instance, the pessimism and perplexity before the modern world is accompanied by his idyllic projection into the past. Here we witness a barren desert on which there falls with uninterrupted volleys the dry humor of the author, who does not even seem to have any faith, any hope, any thought. An invisible character, the *Daimone* or Mentor, accompanies the author in his peregrinations, but his utterances are not much above those of his pupil.

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[23] *La vita operosa*, p. 130.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 135–136.

In his latest books, *Eva ultima* ("The Last Eve"), 1924, *La donna dei miei sogni* ("The Woman of My Dreams"), 1925, *La donna nel sole* ("The Woman in the Sun"), 1928, Bontempelli has relinquished the practical content of his previous books and has set out on a lyric flight, in which symbolism plays a great part. *La donna dei miei sogni* and *La donna nel sole* are collections of humorous remarks which both in style and in thought show marked progress over the production that can be called futuristic. In *La vita intensa* and *La vita operosa* he attempted to write in a careless and ordinary tone which is not at all in keeping with a work of imagination. In these last books Bontempelli's contacts with the Neo-Classicism of Giosuè Carducci are bearing fruit, as we find in them a lyric prose which is very appropriate to the new fantastic mood of the author, who has come out of the sluggish indifference of post-war days. A very important recent book is *Eva ultima.* It deserves a thorough analysis in order to bring out what the author has hidden under his new symbolism.

The fundamental theme in *Eva ultima* is the barrier which separates human love. Bontempelli exemplifies his modern and neurotic humanity in Evandro and Eva, whose characteristics and personal traits he purposely veils and blurs in order to present in them man and woman in general. We follow their love adventure from the time they first meet on the imaginary plateau of Duiblar, then through a fantastic ride to a distant castle and finally through the hatred that develops between them. Love is not possible between those two human beings, because intelligence, objectiveness, reflection, the very words which they use to express the unity of their lives, conspire to separate them. Eva expects from her mate qualities he does not possess; she is ready to recoil from him the very moment she has been his. "You do not know how to love as a woman desires." She rebels and Evandro in his masculine indifference retorts: "No man knows how to love as a woman wants him to. This is the secret through which love is spasmodically perpetuated in the world."[27] The fundamental chasm between the two lovers is determined by the fact that each tries to love the other, not for the qualities that he possesses, but for those that one wants the other to have. For this reason, Bontempelli fashions a marionette, Bubulì, who has no individuality of his own, being completely the reflection of what Eva wants him to be both in his acts and thoughts. Eva falls in love with this marionette as she finds in his passiveness a complete understanding.

Eva ultima is an interesting and curious book, but it does not give the full measure of Bontempelli's talent. One is struck more by his technique than by the content of the book. Technique has not yet penetrated the content of ideas so as to merge into it, affording that unbreakable unity which is found in the period of the complete development of the writer. The beautiful pages in which Bontempelli describes the freshness of nature, the grandeur of a forest, the outline of trees and rocks on a dark night, attract one more than the vicissitudes of Evandro and Eva.

The author has made a great stride forward in *Il figlio di due madri* ("The Child of Two Mothers"), 1929, one of the most significant books of our day. It is the complete triumph of a theme dear to all humorists: the logic of the illogical.

Bontempelli returns here more definitely than in *Eva*

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[27] *Eva ultima*, p. 100.

ultima to the dialectic process of *I sette savi*, which he combines with that process of intellectualism that Pirandello has used in many of his great plays. The fundamental theme in *Il figlio di due madri* is, in fact, one of Pirandello's postulates: imaginative reality is stronger than actual reality.

If through some strange happening a child should look at his mother with a blank gaze and should tell her that he does not know her, that he has never seen her before, the *fact* that the child *is* flesh of her flesh and that for him she has suffered what all mothers suffer for their children would not be of any value whatever. Moreover, if the same child should say that his real mother is another woman and if, upon seeing her, he should run into her arms, their souls merging into one happiness, the writer of this *illogical* fiction would indeed have every pragmatic proof to show that the real mother is the one that the inner eyes of the child have seen and not the unfortunate one who is bereaved of her child through a weird happening.

This is precisely what happens in *Il figlio di due madri*. We are taken by the quixotic writer to a wealthy home in which a birthday is being celebrated. We have the opportunity of seeing the happiness of the mother, the bored interest of the rich bourgeois father and the joy of a seven-year-old child, Mario, who is engrossed in eating cakes and sweetmeats.

There is nothing extraordinary in this home nor in its members. Here is the father: "A man obscure in history, but of some importance in life, if it is important to earn every year a great deal of money in transacting big business."[28] And here is the mother: "Still young and attractive, for those at least who like women ready to obey, small and with pronounced curves, and with a tranquil temperament."[29] The child, Mario, is perched on a chair near his nurse, "a pale nurse, still young but without a smile: the rays of the sun shun her." [30]

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[28] *Il figlio di due madri*, p. 10.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The family doctor comes to offer his congratulations. "'Mario,' he cries, 'I have come to give you my best wishes. It is the seventh time already, indeed the eighth, since I saw you born, seven years ago in Milan.'" [31] A closer observation reveals to us a child whose temperament may lead to extraordinary events. He is a little boy with "a prominent forehead, large soft eyes full of slowly moving enigmas." [32] Strange lights that have obscured for Bontempelli the limpidity of childhood, pass in his eyes.

Mario asks the doctor at what hour he was born. Upon being told the time that he came into this world, he remarks that his real birthday is within an hour, since it then was one o'clock. "'Certainly,' laughs the boisterous doctor, 'within an hour. *Now you are not yet born. You do not exist.*'" [33]

This joking remark sets the child thinking. It stirs the strange lights that flicker in his eyes. At two o'clock a weird atmosphere envelops the child as he is in the public garden with his nurse. "Even the light and the shadows, the air and the plants had become motionless around the child, and the sun seemed fixed in the center of the sky." [34]

When the mother arrives, Mario looks at her with dismayed wonder as if he had never seen her before. He asks to be taken home and he gives the address of a different home from theirs. They go there, the mother trembling and distressed, the child absorbed in a dreamy and reserved silence. They find the house and, strangely enough, Mario knows it as well as if he had lived there all his life. He shows to his mother, whom he now believes to be a stranger he has met the day before at two o'clock, the picture of a woman that he calls his real mother.

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[30] *Il figlio di due madri*, p. 11.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Bontempelli has created this strange and unusual situation to bring out the love and sorrow of a mother. Arianna, the real mother, passes from surprise to grief as Mario, after insisting that he wishes to see his real mother, becomes antagonistic to her. "When her eyes were able to see again, she found herself staring at her son's face and saw that it had become hostile." [35] A strange conviction that it is of no use resisting the will of her child comes over her. She gradually cannot call him by his name, and she feels that he is assuming before her, in spite of herself, the fantastic personality that he has given himself.

On the following day, the other mother, Luciana Stirner, arrives. She is a dreamy, lithe creature who has been waiting for seven years for her child to return. Seven years before, her little son, Ramiro, had died, the very hour that Mario was born. She had quietly waited by the sea, confiding her sorrow to its immensity, but never weary of waiting. Now Ramiro in the person of Mario has returned.

As gloom darkens Arianna's serenity, joy flows back into the still, blue eyes of the waiting mother, Luciana. Bontempelli has embodied in her the power of dream and imagination. She partakes of the nature of sound and light. She is evanescent and in her evanescence she merges into a world of shadows and mobile light, a reflection of which abides in Mario's eyes.

Seven years had elapsed from Ramiro's death and she had lived all that time in her imagination, passing her days in the contemplation of days gone by, thinking of her father, a celebrated Austrian musician, of her lover, Giorgio, a young man who killed himself because he had tired of her love. Then there comes little Ramiro into her life, bringing the poetry of childhood to her until the tragedy of his death transforms her into a creature of imagination. She has never believed that Ramiro has died. "The moment in which he remains motionless on his little bed, and then when she puts him in the tiny coffin which they closed, and then when she takes him to be buried and throws the earth over him with her hands—these things are not true. They are stupid scenes which never took place: if they had taken place, Luciana would have died." [36]

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[35] *Il figlio di due madri*, p. 33.

After many vicissitudes, through which the worlds of the law and of science and of theosophy are deeply stirred, Mario is kidnapped by a gypsy and vanishes. Arianna, who does not possess the solace of imagination, dies. Luciana, on the contrary, resumes her pilgrimage on the road of hope and faith and finds consolation in the stars.

At this point the illogicality of the situation ends and the author shows us that before the bereavement of death nothing is more consoling than sentiment and imagination. Through a strange and even illogical situation he has presented the struggle of our individual sentiment with the crushing actual necessity of nature and of history.

This novel is a landmark in the development of Bontempelli. He has used his imagination to present, through a bizarre situation, a touching drama of life. Characters like Luciana Stirner are not easily forgotten. They seem to come from the distant land where Beatrice and Ophelia abide and whence the creatures of imagination are called to live in the immortality of art.

MINOR WRITERS

VINCENZO GERACE

(Reggio Calabria, 1876–)

The interest in ideas, together with many of the distinguishing features it had with the writers of the *La Voce* group, appears also in the novel, *La grazia* ("Illumination"), by Vincenzo Gerace, published in 1911, although it was written in 1907.

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[36] *Il figlio di due madri*, p. 74.

Gerace brought into fiction the idealism of Benedetto Croce, and to Croce we trace the philosophical concern that is so much in evidence in the literature of the early years of our century. Although most of the group rebelled against Croce, it was he who gave to the young generation of his day the love for ideas. The motif, so frequently found at this time, of the gap which widens between the world of the absolute and that of the actual reality, is a motif which derives directly from Croce's teaching.

Gerace had also felt the influence of another master: Antonio Fogazzaro. His style has the ductile and soft qualities of the author of *Piccolo mondo antico* and Lorenzo in *La grazia* reminds one of Franco Maironi in more than one of his mental and emotional traits; only Lorenzo is more tormented than Franco Maironi and more abstract. It is hard for us to imagine Franco Maironi in a mood of this sort: "His deep, dark eyes moved over everything and it was easy to see that they were absorbed in a *constant* thought of anguish." [37] Maironi has a composure in his sorrow that never needs generalizations in order to be felt.

Nature is distant and cold to Lorenzo and when he longs to merge into the "Universal life, the infinite," [38] it is nature that reminds him of the limitations of this life. "The infinite shrank into nothing. The beauty of Being lost its mystery. Life from 'universal' became 'individual.'" [39] It is enough to notice the fact that the author uses philosophical terms lavishly in order to understand the origin of his fiction and the quality of his temperament.

If we are curious to know the hero better and follow him to his studio, we find that he peruses books mostly philosophical and has in his library the works of Plato, Bruno, William James, Croce, and Gentile, together with the

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[37] *La grazia*, p. 2.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

"Little Flowers" of Saint Francis and the "Confessions" of Saint Augustine.

The study of these thinkers and saints has a morbid effect on him. He is constantly seeking himself in a measure that makes it impossible for him to live a normal and serene life. He confesses to Giulia with whom he is in love: "I seek my mind, my ego, my God: I do not know: something which is constantly present here in my spirit, in the atmosphere, in the world, and yet continuously disappears and eludes me. And I remain in darkness: I grope in vain to seize it, in this darkness: it escapes, it vanishes: I catch only a shadow." [40]

Giulia loved him tenderly, but her love was killed by the vain ravings of Lorenzo's mind. She is perfectly drawn in her normality that allows her to look serenely on this life and makes her unable to understand the torment of Lorenzo. She tells him: "Do you know what is the source of your grief? It is your longing after the absolute. . . . What is the infinite, contemplated in the light of the eternal, but the absolute void, the absolute nothing?" [41] She beseeches him in vain to acknowledge this simple but benevolent truth.

A succession of unhappy events leads the disconsolate Lorenzo to greater sorrow and despair. His brother, Giovanni, is coarse and violent, his father drinks excessively and covers their family with shame. One day Lorenzo meets him drunk in the street. He is denied the joy of friendship and of love, as three girls in whom he is interested cannot endure being associated with a man who lives in a constant state of frenzy. One night, in the depths of abjection, he sees a revolting cripple, "Lo Storto," and finds in him the perfect image of his own moral misery and the symbol of a monstrous and revolting humanity.

Everything is gloomy around the young man who feels himself surrounded by hostility and indifference, when a sudden change brings a new light into his soul. He realizes the futility of his quest. "So God, whom I sought with so much torment, is nothing but my own soul in what is divine in it, that is, in what is most gloriously human in it."[42] So thinks Lorenzo, and nature and life become full of beauty for him.

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[40] *La grazia* p. 70.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

He has broken the spell which filled his youth with sorrow. He now accepts life in its entirety. "Life is sensation and thought, meditation and pleasure, idyl and drama, struggle, abandon, will. Everything is sacred in it if man lends to it his divinity."[43] It is the same solution as that of Papini and of Soffici in that they too renounced abstraction and empty thinking to hasten to the bosom of nature or to a form of thought which was not renouncement to, but integration of life.

In 1927 the author published a book of criticism, *La tradizione e la presente barbarie* ("Tradition and Present-day Barbaric Taste"), in which he points to the sane ideals of Italian tradition as the only means of terminating the orgy of exoticism which, according to Gerace, has led Italian letters to a sort of barbarity. There is in the book a keen desire to find a new path altogether different from the one he pursued in his youth. The intellectual wanderings of that time, however, helped him to write a novel which, having been composed in 1907, makes him one of the first to infuse the drama of ideas into Italian fiction.

FRANCESCO FLORA

(Colle Sannita, 1891–)

Very similar to Gerace's theme is the one developed by Francesco Flora in his novel *La città terrena* ("The Earthly City"), 1927. As the author is well known to the intellectual public of Italy because of his excellent critical study on

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[42] *La grazia*, p. 170.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

Gabriele D'Annunzio, the novel has attracted considerable attention. Flora has revealed in his critical work a great power of insight, and he has used the same method in presenting to the reader his hero, Giuliano Solari, a poet and novelist who has faith in thought only.

Flora, too, grew in the school of Croce and Gentile, and the novel bears many traces of their idealism. The whole world is to Giuliano Solari nothing but thought, a postulate that is the very basis of Gentile's philosophy. Even the human body is "limpid thought" to our hero, and every act, every instinct, every physical and intellectual activity shares the nature of this intangible power. Even death and sorrow can be conquered by it, and love radiates its divine light.

Giuliano Solari's intellectualism is closely woven with his humanity, however, and we feel the weight but also the beauty of his mortal condition when he tries to translate his thought into actual experience and sees the castle of his dreams crumble into nothing. Love leaves his heart like a barren desert, death and space defy him and conquer him, scoffing at his aspirations, but also revealing a grieving man in the dialectician and the dreamer.

The present generation has freed itself from states of mind such as the writers that we have just studied portrayed in their fiction. The present mood in Italy aspires towards more constructive thinking and veers towards action. These men, however, contributed a new and interesting chapter to the history of the Italian novel.

VI

THE NOVEL OF HUMILITY AND UNCERTITUDE: "I CREPUSCOLARI" OR "TWILIGHT WRITERS"

THE term *Crepuscolari* is here applied to a group of novels that deal with the same themes that first appeared in poems which the critic G. A. Borgese characterized as "Twilight Poetry." Such was the poetry of Guido Gozzano (1883–1916) and Sergio Corazzini (1887–1907), Fausto Maria Martini (1886–) and Marino Moretti (1885–). Their poetry was diffused with a vague and undefinable melancholy, and it arose like a gray mist from the commonest experiences of life.

The same characteristics are found in novels that we may call *Crepuscolari.* In them we find an atmosphere and a feeling of humility, a tendency to hide oneself in a little nook where the noises of life are like sounds softened by the snow. Their characters have the intellectual traits neither of Papini's nor of Soffici's. They are average individuals in an ordinary setting whom the writers present in the simplicity and monotony of everyday life. One would be inclined to think of Verga's early characters were it not for the fact that the writers of this group do not possess his objectiveness. They are eminently subjective, and both characters and events are reflections of their own experience. Their art, although humble, is the result of a conscious effort, and its simplicity is only apparent.

The term "provincial" which has been applied to them describes only the outer elements of their art, and it does not take into consideration the writers' grief in contemplating the events that they portray.

We are considering in this group Marino Moretti, the poet of humble life, and Federico Tozzi, who in his novels expresses the misery of those who through their uncertainty are destined to succumb in the struggle for life. Mario Puccini also, a younger writer, can be considered with Moretti because of the similarity of their artistic ideals.

MARINO MORETTI

(Cesenatico Romagna, 1885–)

Marino Moretti began his career as a poet. From poetry he passed to short-story writing and later he essayed the wider range of the novel. This is the line of outward development followed by Moretti and it shows with what care he prepared himself for his novels, which are among the most significant of contemporary Italian fiction.

As a poet he followed, although in a minor tone, the ideals of Giovanni Pascoli, the poet of intimacy and silence. Moretti's poems were made up of such themes as the remembrance of a school chum, of a day at Cesena in the house of his newlywed sister, of old spinsters, his teachers, in a word, of the intimate and minor lyricism of humble persons who accept life passively. This melancholy musing on life has remained a constant trait in Moretti's fiction.

In the early stages of Moretti's art, his pensiveness takes the form of curiosity. *Il paese degli equivoci* ("The Town of Equivocation"), 1907, and *I lestofanti* ("The Meddlers"), 1910, show the uncertainty of the author, who at this time vacillates between vice and virtue, good and evil, violence and meekness, as he studies the radicals of Romagna. He notices the strong and violent men who are characteristic of this region, and he finds himself at a loss to understand them and to reconcile them with his timid temperament. Although the turbulent republicans (a sort of idealistic socialists) are in the foreground, the real character in these short stories is Moretti, who opposes his own meekness to that volcanic expression of life.

The author's uncertainty breaks forth into broad laughter in *Ha! Ha!*, 1910, in *I pesci fuor d'acqua* ("Fish Out of Water"), 1914, *Conoscere il mondo* ("To Know the World"), 1919, and *Personaggi secondari* ("Secondary Personages"), 1920. Moretti has now become convinced that life is a strange equation in which man is like a fish out of water.

This is the period of Moretti's humor, a humor determined by his disappointing discovery that life is the conquest of the strong over the weak. His grotesque characters are but the reflection of his disappointment.

When Moretti passed from the short story to the novel, he had already acquired a deeper experience of life. He felt in it the presence of a law that his early characters did not know: the law of resignation. This constitutes, henceforth, the central point of Moretti's fiction and the only strength that either he or his characters possessed when confronted by the sadness and indifference of life. We still have the setting of the novels in Romagna, but the author has given expression to his melancholy through clear-cut characters, the heroes and heroines of resignation, who stand in sharp contrast with the haughty and turbulent people of Romagna.

The monotonous stretch of gray fog has now become animated, it has become life itself, life weaving a moment of joy and of love on the warp of human existence, and then moving on, a slow and placid current hedged in by the infinite. The sense of the infinite which is felt especially in the latest novels is the conquest of a mature Moretti. It merges into the idealistic revival of today, and it brings to his novels an interest in a plane of life which was not felt in his early attempts at fiction.

Moretti is a direct descendant of Verga. The monotony of tone and color, the commonplace characters and the naturalness of passions that we find in him are determined by the fact that Moretti, like Verga, brings everyday life into his novels. This compels Moretti to search into his characters in order to reveal his own drama through them.

From this state of mind of the author are derived the living figures, mostly women, garbed in sorrow and sacrifice, in whom Moretti has embodied his sympathy for the meek and sensitive. The situations are very similar in all of his novels, but they are varied by the diversities that life affords him. In *Il sole del sabato* ("The Sun of the Sabbath"), 1916, Barberina, a woman of the lower class, but endowed with a sensitive soul, sees her love for Mauro offended and destroyed by the coarseness of the town people. Guendalina in *Guenda*, 1918, is so timid and uncertain in her love for Riccardo, her dead husband's brother, that she lets happiness go by, and her tender and beautiful love remains unfulfilled. Cristina in *La voce di Dio* ("The Voice of God"), 1920, falls victim to her own desire for freedom. Giannetta in *Nè bella nè brutta* ("Neither Beautiful nor Homely"), 1921, grieves over her sacrifice in marrying an unworthy individual and rejecting the love of a youth whom she dearly loves. Fifteen years later she sees him marry her daughter who was the only joy of her life. Mimì in *I due fanciulli* ("Two Children"), 1922, loves Santino, her playmate from childhood. When, after a tragedy at home [her father kills her mother whom he finds unfaithful], she meets him again and feels in her heart all the love that blooms in a lonely existence, Santino brutally brushes her aside, only to become the lover of her step-mother.

The most significant of Moretti's books are *La voce di Dio* ("The Voice of God"), 1920, and *I puri di cuore* ("The Pure of Heart"), 1923. They give the full measure of Moretti's art in that they possess a broader and more universal significance than the earlier books. In *La voce di Dio* the tumultuous Romagna is contrasted with the intimacy of home life, the violence of men like Ciro Budda and Zio

Tugnaz with the humility of Menghenina, who tells her young mistress, Cristina, stories and legends that from time immemorial have thrived in the imagination of the women of Romagna. Menghenina kneads bread and marks on it the figure of the cross while murmuring a prayer as simple and deep as the ancient one, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Cristina returns to Romagna after a long absence in southern Italy. She wants to be free, free like the men of Romagna, strong, happy lovers of wine and women. She meets one of them and falls prey to her longing for a vague sense of liberty, which transcends her understanding. Menghenina, the faithful and silent servant, watches over her, and keeps alive in her soul the spark of goodness and humility. After months of agony, after a struggle which is all the more dramatic as it is unseen, Cristina returns to the religious feelings that her mother and Menghenina had taught her. In the depths of sin, in the anguish of pain she says, "Menghenina, you are right. There is no salvation, no hope, no certitude, except to kneel before the altar and say the prayer that our mother taught us, to be like Mother and like you, to make an offering of our hearts and a lamp of our soul. I am poor and humble like a servant; I am like you, Menghenina."[1] So humble and so luminous has life made Cristina who in her sin has heard the voice of God.

The same motif runs through *I puri di cuore.* Moretti has rid his art of every trace of exoticism. In the early fiction there opened here and there sudden vistas of life outside Romagna: Paris, Vichy, Cressoney, Rome, but here Moretti has narrowed down his scene to a small part of Romagna, in which he places his pure of heart, who, in the course of the novel, are crushed by the strong and violent.

The first part of the novel is occupied by the mother, Fortunata Saladini. She has the hieratic composure of an idol. She is clothed in black, stately, stern, almost ascetic. She is above all haughty, and she reminds her children of the nobility of their ancestors. But life is cruel to them and to her. Alma, a gentle but passive girl, marries Pietro, only to see him imprisoned for fraud the very day of the wedding. Matteo, a son, takes to bad company. Luca, the eldest son, is a slow-witted, good-natured fellow, of whom Moretti has made a pathetic and deeply human figure. His pale lips and emaciated face speak of innocence and childishness, yet he is the only one who can endure through his simplicity the adversity of fate.

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[1] *La voce di Dio,* p. 258.

Under the constant pressure of sorrow and misfortune the old mother loses her haughtiness and feels a greater tenderness for poor Luca. "His eyes were calm and clear. There was no sadness nor uncertainty in them. She would have liked to stretch out her arms and to cry on the shoulder of her son, to tell him everything, ask him everything, but once again she dared not. She feared to disturb the peace of an innocent person and to displease Luca's haughty republican father whose effigy was in the room." [2]

The novel is entirely based on the study of repressed emotions, on tender feelings, which pass unnoticed by the average man and the average artist. In the portrayal of the mother of Luca, of his young cousin Unico, who desires to be a priest, of Bonina, an outcast, Moretti has described characters that can be compared for pathos and depth only with those of Verga. Luca's passiveness, his misery, then his love for a lamb and for the little baby of an outcast, that was born in his house, are lights that only a sensitive writer like Moretti can concentrate on life.

Thus Luca looks into the eyes of the outcast Bonina. "Luca realized now how much unexpressed nobility there was in those quiet eyes, of a beautiful gray blue, that had the languor of weak creatures, like those of convalescents and of new mothers." [3] Here is Unico, the boy who wants

[2] *I puri di cuore*, p. 113.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

to be a priest: "A nineteen-year-old child, tall, slender, with the long and pale face of the priests who have suffered in sleepless nights and fasting. He had a black cassock closed up to his neck with a row of interminable red buttons, and it seemed that the white collar tightened his throat like a rope." [4]

Romagna used as a background for his novels represented Moretti's actual experience, his very existence, and as such it is laden with the pathos of his sensitive temperament.

Only once he left Romagna and wrote a novel about an imaginary island, where women who had not known love in their youth could go and enjoy the discreet courtship of middle-aged artists and singers. This is the atmosphere of *Isola dell'amore* ("The Island of Love"), 1920. It is wholly imaginative and fantastic, but real tears and emotions glow under the conventions of the discreet love affairs related in the novel.

The most important source of inspiration for Moretti was his mother, Suor Filomena, as he lovingly called her. A little nun of virtue and silence, she has lent her gentleness to many of the women who appear in her son's novels. He loved her with a devotion and tenderness which is only possible in a timid person like Moretti, who found in her the consolation for his loneliness. The two lived alone at Cesenatico, where Suor Filomena had been a school teacher and where she died in 1922. She passed away as quietly as she had lived. "She died without saying anything to me," her heart-broken son repeated to himself. He was stunned by grief, and life had lost all meaning for him. Panzini tells us that people often thought that Moretti was away from Cesenatico while in reality he "was in the room of his sick mother. For months he did not leave the room and her pallor was reflected on him." [5]

Moretti has immortalized the silent and gentle figure of his mother in the novels, *Mia madre* ("My Mother"), 1923, and *Il romanzo della mamma* ("My Mother's Romance"), 1924. They are among the best that he has written, and there is in them the poetry of home-life which cheered the pale existence of Moretti's youth and manhood.

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[4] *I puri di cuore*, p. 122.

[5] Preface to *Mia madre*, p. x.

In the same way that most of Moretti's heroines are modeled after his mother, many of his heroes, as Luca in *I puri di cuore* and Marino Fogliani in *Il trono dei poveri* ("The Throne of the Poor"), 1928, are the reflection of himself. They express the contemplative side of the literature of today just as characters like Andrea Sperelli and Elena Muti were the embodiment of a different outlook on life. We mention these characters of D'Annunzio's *Il piacere* because Moretti refers to them in his novel, ridiculing the aestheticism that predominated in Italy at the outbreak of the war. He concentrates his attack on the greatest exponent of that literature, D'Annunzio. "Do you see? The Trinità dei Monti, the Piazza di Spagna staircase; Elena Muti, the songs in honor of Yseult; the war has come and has swept away all these old things forever." [6]

Lost in his attitude of passiveness and humility, Moretti contrasts in the novel the conditions of the little republic of San Marino with the other countries of Europe. He admires the former: "a state which has realized through the centuries the Christian idea of humility and remissness: the poor will be rich, the weak will be strong." [7]

Marino Fogliani, a citizen of the little republic, is a typical expression of Moretti's ideal. Even his physical being bears the signs of the spiritual process that has created him in Moretti's mind. He is an albino, fearful of the light that offends his unprotected eyes, ready to obey the living and the dead. The living, through the interference of an aunt, Zia Mustiola, and the dead, in the form of a desire of his dead parents, conjure to have him marry another quiet and remiss creature, Agata. Marino does not know his mind in this, as in all matters, and goes to Rome, hoping to publish a dramatic poem.

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[6] *Il trono dei poveri*, p. 186.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

At this point the story takes on all the appearance of a biography. It seems to be the study of the life of the capital done by the author while he lived there as a Red Cross nurse during the war.

Marino Fogliani comes in contact with a frivolous middle-aged society woman, Viviana Montalbo, who re-enacts the scenes of D'Annunzio's *Piacere* in order to entice the frigid and timid Marino. She succeeds, in fact, in becoming his mistress. It is a moment of folly but also of joy in the monotonous life of Marino. The war comes and it carries away all the passions of man, uncovering a new being in Viviana Montalbo. Her son is among the first to die in the service, her family is scattered, she herself goes among the soldiers as a nurse. She meets again her former lover in a field hospital. The war has purified them: "He turned, she answered him with a long look which was almost maternal." [8]

Marino returns to his little republic, marries his Agata and is elected Regent. It is the triumph of goodness and of humility.

Moretti and the writers of post-war fame seem to have returned to the point of view of Dante, who felt reverence for man and was grieved at seeing the human features distorted or otherwise offended. They, too, feel reverence for man and they exalt his noble aspirations rather than glorify and exaggerate his instincts.

In the nearness of life to art lie the greatness and also the negative part of Moretti's fiction. At times the lyric motif of the novel is diffused and becomes stifled by the mass of details presented. When the lyric element asserts itself, however, it rises like a voice heavy with the weight of life and luminous with the glow of resignation that Moretti lends to his characters.

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[8] *Il trono dei poveri*, p. 227.

FEDERICO TOZZI

(SIENA, 1883–ROME, 1920)

There is a close relationship between Tozzi's fiction and his life. In his fiction he reflects various events of his youth through which one comes to know the sensitiveness and loneliness of his soul. His themes are humble and primitive, his art offers a subdued light that reminds one of his lonely life and his egocentric temperament, which seems embittered by a sense of hostility towards men and nature.

The sadness which oppressed his youth was not determined by intellectual restlessness as in the case of Papini. Tozzi's was a more humble and human sadness, caused by lack of the warmth of love at home and later in life. His father, a thrifty and narrow-minded innkeeper, did not understand his son who was born with the passion of art. Tozzi's mother died when he was a boy, and he received little care from his step-mother.

Unable to remain at his father's home after having made little progress in his studies at school, he became a railroad clerk. He has recorded the unhappiness of those few months of work in *Ricordi di un impiegato* ("Recollections of a Clerk"), a novel published in 1920 but written earlier.

In 1908, his father died and Tozzi inherited his estate, which he gradually sold to support himself and his little family. These events echo in *Il podere* ("The Estate"), 1921, the best of Tozzi's novels, the publication of which he did not live to see. He died at the age of thirty-seven, when he was ready to create a work that, judging from what he had already accomplished, would have made him the Verga of our times.

As a man, Tozzi was brusque, almost uncouth, but sincere and upright. He possessed the strength of a life not dwarfed, caressed, weakened nor polished. He had an impulsive, passionate, and contradictory nature, a violent temper, and a great need of tender friendship.

As an artist, Tozzi makes one think of the old Sienese masters, woodcarvers or painters, who in the almost complete absence of technique are capable of conveying a strong impression of life. Tozzi has kept in his art the strength and simplicity of these ancestors who like him lived in the silent, austere and mediaeval city which is conducive to concentration and mysticism. Tozzi, too, belonged to a group of Neo-mystics, called "San Giorgio."

His art is, in general, gray and static. There is in it a fixity which can be explained only by the author's constant auto-analysis and by his feeling as if he were a ghost among real men, mostly of the peasant class, to whom he lends, by way of contrast, a granite hardness and well-defined contour. Occasionally a gentle note softens the cold melancholy which permeates his novels. It is the remembrance of his mother's quiet resignation and of the patient and intelligent devotion of his young wife.

Tozzi's first book was *Bestie* ("Beasts"), 1917, a kind of diary in which, day by day, drop by drop, he distills the gray monotony of his life in Siena. It is written in lyric prose and in an extremely personal tone, as Tozzi's dissatisfaction with his life has not yet taken a concrete form in the character of a novel.

In *Con gli occhi chiusi* ("Blindfolded"), 1919, he lends his bitter loneliness to Pietro Rosi, a vacillating and misunderstood youth who lives in the country near Siena in his father's inn. There, among the girls who work on his father's farm, he meets Ghisola, a peasant girl.

Ghisola is instinctive to the point of being unmoral, and Tozzi in so presenting her breaks away from the usual theme that considers a woman the destruction of the hero's mysticism. He does not take sides either with the weak or against the strong. He does not judge. He merely observes what happens and from the day that Ghisola with a knitting-needle pricks the hand of Pietro, who was then a child, to the day that she tells him that she expects to become a mother, she is presented purely as a passive creature of instinct. As an instinctive being she is perfectly drawn, contrasted as she is with Pietro's sensitive nature.

Pietro, struggling against the primitive Ghisola and the Sienese peasants, suffers unspeakably. Lost in the haze of a platonic aspiration, he falls prey to his naïveté and feels his responsibility, even when he knows that Ghisola has belonged to others.

Although one is conscious of Tozzi's effort in breaking away from his own subjectiveness, the lyric motif of his isolation has taken a concrete form in the uncertainty of Pietro and in the directness of action and feelings of a finely etched throng of peasants. There are notations of this sort in the novel: "Pietro, then a little boy, was not listening, but it seemed to him that those around him acted as figures in his dreams." [9] Or, following the introspection of the child as the latter grew into manhood: "He asked himself why people and things around him should appear to him only as an oscillating and heavy nightmare." [10] "A feeling of annihilation took possession of his brain, like the icy water of a spring. It seemed to him strange to exist, he was frightened at himself, tried to forget himself, gazing for a long time at the palms of his hands until he saw them no longer." [11] Pietro's mother dies: "He got down from his bed and, while dressing, pretended to imitate the gestures of grief that he had seen. In this manner he finally experienced a mute hilarity, mixed with terror. But when he was made to kiss his mother, before they put her in the coffin, he thought: 'Why do I not get into it too? Put me in there too.'" [12] The book is a continuous flashing of strange lights that explore mysterious depths in Tozzi's heart. Heavy dark clouds hang over the slowly moving events that seem to stifle life and to make the world desolate and bleak.

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[9] *Con gli occhi chiusi*, p. 15.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Tozzi's best experiments at fiction are *Le tre croci* ("The Three Crosses"), 1920, and *Il podere* ("The Estate"), 1921. Austere and strong, having eliminated every superfluous detail, sure of his technique, or rather unaware of it, he concentrates his efforts on a study of life which is as objective as a writer like Tozzi can make it.

Le tre croci is the story of the three Gambi brothers who slowly deteriorate physically, financially, and morally to such a degree that death is the only solution. Three crosses, bought by the pity of their two nieces, stand on their tombs as a sign of peace, while life goes on indifferent.

Tozzi presents in this novel three individuals very similar to one another and to any other mortal. Their lives drag on in their miserable book-shop in Siena until a forgery precipitates the catastrophe and Giulio, the only one who has a modicum of moral sense, commits suicide, while the other two slowly die in misery and squalor.

The slow process of disintegration of those uneventful existences is such as tests the skill of any artist, yet Tozzi, through his penetrating and tenacious art, has succeeded in differentiating very clearly the three brothers. He has carved out their ordinary profiles, tenaciously working until they have acquired the sharp relief of an etching. The passions here described, gluttony, apathy, passivity, are so common, so dull, that he is forced to insist on them in order to make them visible and vivid. They are vivid, however, with a cold light of their own; they are human and true.

In *Il podere* Tozzi returns to the autobiographical novel, and disguises himself in Remigio Selmi, a weak and pitiful man in his thirties, who inherits his father's farm and sees everybody and everything conspire against him. He appears to be unable to cope with the violence of nature, which destroys his crops, and with the dishonesty of his farmers, who steal everything from him until he is killed by one of them who hates him. Both in *Tre croci* and in *Il podere* Tozzi has reduced the number of his characters to the essential figures on whom he focuses all his attention. The central figure here is Remigio, a perfectly drawn character. Tozzi has searched into the heart of this weak man and has discovered tender feelings that no one appreciates. It is his own life and heart that he bares and his analysis has the pathos and warmth of real life. Around him move three farmers and their wives, clear-cut solid figures who press hard around the weak Remigio and finally destroy his farm and him, too. In the background, there are secondary figures, a lawyer, a business man, merely sketched, living in the light that Remigio sheds on them.

Tozzi has acquired a sureness of touch and a strength that heretofore he did not possess. We quote at random: "A filthy old man who wore an overcoat even in summer, with his mustache always dirty with saliva and tobacco." [13] "Corrado Crestai was almost two metres tall, thin, and always yellow, with eyes that seemed made of lead, with fingers so thin that one could see the shape of the bones." [14] He has purified his art by pruning away all that was not strictly necessary and by transfusing his lyricism into the acts and events that constitute life.

These novels of Tozzi express a sort of pitiless asceticism, an asceticism without heaven and without the stars. They are based on a negative point of view of man and of life, just as Tozzi's life at Siena was negative. With his visit to Rome, where he went to find work and a publisher, his constructive period begins. In *Gli egoisti* ("Egoists"), 1923, a novel left unfinished, he presents a new hero in Dario, a musician who has lost the passiveness of Tozzi's early characters, and a man of faith. Tozzi has emerged from his solitude. Indeed he looks upon it with a sense of friendliness. "He [Dario] wanted to understand his solitude: he wanted to understand it without hating it. He found in it that indefinable sense of things which remain unknown even to our soul—solitude was good." [15] Dario is now amenable to love, and he falls in love with Albertina, a girl who understands his struggles and his art. He acquires through her a new sense of purity. One day a harlot tempts him. The temptation seems to him absurd and repugnant. "He felt sure and tranquil, as vast as the night, lost in the softness of the stars, that are always alike." [16]

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[13] *Il podere*, p. 24.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Dario's life is not barren like that of Pietro or Remigio. He has his affection for Albertina, he has his music, he has faith in God. These states of mind are not prosaically static; they are vivified by sudden reactions that give life to them. Here is Dario in a religious mood: "He felt the need of expressing his thankfulness, to thank *someone*. He would have liked to see God immediately." [17] He goes to an old church in Rome, the Ara Coeli. "Dario did not remember any prayer, but he concentrated his thoughts and tried to pray until it seemed to him that he and the whole church had merged into one feeling. Then he asked whether that would be enough for the Lord. But when he stood up he was no longer capable of believing." [18]

Albertina, his music, God, are the constructive elements out of which Tozzi fashions his new hero's life. As in the case of Moretti, of Pirandello, and of Borgese, we find here a solution, a synthesis in a sort of spiritual program. "Those who succeed must continuously live by themselves and not give explanations to any one but themselves. Those who succeed in working are to be readily recognized from the mob of those who are boastful, stupid, and perverse." [19] These are the "egoists" and Dario has been one of them. Now he leaves for the country and there he expects to find "a certitude which would have formed the sentiment of his conscience."[20] Tozzi, too, had reached his unity in the harmony of his intellect and of his sentiment, but the span of his life was too short to express it in full.

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[15] *Gli egoisti*, p. 13.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

MARIO PUCCINI

(SINIGAGLIA, MARCHE, 1887–)

Mario Puccini may be included among the "Twilight" writers, because he has many characteristics in common with them, and especially with the representative man of the group, Marino Moretti. Like Moretti, Puccini veers towards the secluded little towns of his province, towards the narrow dark streets, where he finds the characters who become the passive actors of his fiction. He himself says, "I prefer the alleys and the narrow streets of the city, those of no importance, into which people turn in order to shorten their way home, and in which the shops are opened, with the hopeless feeling of waiting for someone who may as much as take a glance at them."[21]

He has, likewise, the melancholy feeling that we have noticed in Moretti; a sort of innate sadness which both man and nature reflect in his fiction. The roads which Puccini loves, highways or quiet country paths, tell him: "Do with us whatever you wish, you terrible man of the twentieth century; but remember that we lead on, submissive to your pleasure until, now and again, we stop; and the threshold at which we stop is a cemetery."[22]

Puccini is introspective, although he opposes any process tending to intellectualize life. He has not yet expressed in his fiction a definite belief which might serve as a sort of solution for the sadness that oppresses his characters.

[20] *Gli egoisti*, p. 105.

[21] *Zone in ombra*, p. 10.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Thus far his attitude is that life is what it is and that we must face the situation as courageously as we can. It is the same solution in which the great poet Giacomo Leopardi, whom Puccini admires greatly and has studied, found comfort: "I live very much within myself and with myself, and when I feel restless in my solitude, it means that the outside world weighs so heavily on me that my thought tries in vain to free and find itself."[23] Puccini's temperament is better described by this confession: "Then [at sixteen years of age] as today, life and its stir reached me as if deadened, and for this reason they called me 'sleepy-head.' But my sleep was only outward; within, my fancy and heart whirled around continuously."[24] This sad, but thoughtful, temperament reflects itself in the gray atmosphere that predominates in Puccini's novels. There we find a crowd of mediocre and weak persons in whom Puccini has embodied his sentiment of life and whom he has noticed in his beloved province of Marche because they were akin to his ideal of man and life. The latest volume of Puccini's short stories, *La vera colpevole* ("The Real Culprit"), 1926, shows better than any other book this attribute of our writer. The culprit is Nature, and Nature makes the little boy, Marino, a hunchback and arouses hatred in the heart of the blind grandfather, Solina. Need one be surprised that the victims of Nature become resentful and vent their bitterness against man, and show cruelty even against their dear ones? Grandfather Solina dies holding in a vise-like grasp the tender foot of his little niece and it takes two men to loosen his grip on the tortured limb. Nature had made him cruel; Nature that had deprived him of his sight and exposed him to the ridicule of his young nephews. Marino, a hunch-back whose growth had been stunted, does not know joy until the day when he sees a dwarf. Is that joy cruel, inhuman? But who is to blame?

The same gray atmosphere hangs over his novels, *La*

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[23] *Zone in ombra*, p. 88.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

vergine e la mondana ("The Virgin and the Harlot"), 1920, and *Dove è il peccato, è Dio* ("Where Sin is, God is"), 1922.

In *La vergine e la mondana* Puccini analyzes a dull passiveness in Giorgio, a young painter who goes to Rome with hopes of glory and success. The fundamental fault of Giorgio is his mediocrity. He is a weakling, weak in good and evil, in his art, in his aspirations. The novel presents Giorgio interested in two girls: Delia, a cold, austere artist whose whole life centers around the technique of her art; and Nina, a prostitute who has kept her innate gentleness even in the corrupted world to which she belongs. Nina loves Giorgio, and she could give him all the pure joys of love, were Giorgio strong enough to understand her. He, on the contrary, wavers for a long time between Delia and Nina and finally returns to his native town, and becomes a teacher of design in the high school there. Mediocrity is his destiny. He marries a quiet girl of the town and buries in the past all his illusions about art and love.

A pathological case of religious mania is presented in *Dove è il peccato, è Dio*. Here is presented Aroldo, a young boy who is studying to become a priest. He has no real call for the priesthood, but an old aunt, Dolinda, wishes him to take holy orders because of his timid and retiring temperament. Aroldo, sensitive and introspective, like Puccini, who fashioned him out of his own experience in the seminary, living in prayers and steeped in the study of theology, desires to have the experience of the mystics, who lost themselves in the light and love of God. But Aroldo is not granted this experience. He begins to torment himself and in vain he asks his superiors and friends why this is so. Finally, he decides that his aunt Dolinda, who had a sordid past, stands between him and God. In his prayers he ardently asks the Lord to remove her, so that he may be allowed to feel His presence. With a perverse joy he sees the old usurer pass away and feels himself purified and capable of the illumination of the mystics.

In *Cola*, 1928, the author uses the World War to portray more than to analyze the Italian temperament of pre-war days. His chief interest centers in Cola, a peasant whom Puccini presents with the objectiveness of a disciple of Giovanni Verga. While in the war, Cola engages in a love affair as readily as he feels moved at the thought of the four children and his wife at home.

One receives at first the impression of a dull monotony. It is the life of a soldier at close range. It seems that the author is constantly restraining his fancy and even his reflective power. The book is but a series of sketches: officers and soldiers grumbling against the government, against the rich, against the war; a patch of blue sky; a glimpse of the serene life at home; then the leaden atmosphere of life in the second and third battle-lines.

Finally the "true war" comes but it is very hastily described. Cola's regiment goes into the fray. "It seems that each has lost a few years of his youth, but little by little there comes resignation."[25] One soldier breaks forth into a war song as they march. "But it was like a sudden and short-lived flame. As they reached the open road and saw it filled with carts, wagons, and animals of every kind, all voices became silent and melancholy fell again on those bent heads."[26]

Cola is wounded in an encounter. When he regains consciousness he finds himself on a hospital cot. He tries to sit up, but discovers that he has lost one arm. Cola is glad. In his slow, but shrewd, brain there looms the thought that he did not fare so badly after all, since he is alive and will receive a pension. He pictures to himself his wife's astonishment at seeing him maimed. "But little by little she, too, should become convinced that the operation with the pension and the rest was a godsend."[27]

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[25] *Cola*, p. 285.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

The whole novel is made up of such commonplace elements, yet one is gradually aware of a hidden pathos and of a light that glitters in the gray atmosphere of Cola's life. There are such remarks as these: "He looked round the room. It was full of beds and on every bed a body and every body was a man."[28] "Cividale! It does not seem any longer the proud city of forty-five days ago when we arrived. There is now a train about to leave: smoke, grinding noises, whistling; that train makes devilish sounds. The air is neither heavy nor turbid. The snow has disappeared. April, candid and sincere, peeps over the public gardens. The air will soon be full of songs."[29]

Puccini's tendency towards simple themes and the stark directness of his technique account for his success in the short story. His volumes, *Essere e non essere* ("To be and not to be"), 1921, *Uomini deboli e uomini forti* ("Weak Men and Strong Men"), 1922, *L'Inganno della carne* ("The Snare of the Flesh"), 1923, contain strongly etched figures that in the small proportions of the story stand out among the most important of this minor form of contemporary fiction.

Among the young writers of today Puccini is the most noteworthy disciple of Verga. He, too, has created clear-cut and strong characters, such as Giovanni in *Caratteri* ("Characters") and the nonagenarian in *Novant'anni* ("Ninety Years Old"), two short stories, in which the author displays a restrained but subtle psychological analysis.

Puccini is too young to have yet created his masterpiece, but the sincerity of his efforts and the care that he bestows on his art may lead him to fashion out of his introspective mood figures worthy of those of his great master.

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[27] *Cola*, p. 294.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 295.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

MINOR WRITERS

NICOLA MOSCARDELLI, AUGUSTO GARSIA, MARIA MESSINA, CAROLA PROSPERI

Among the novelists of today who move in the dusk of the "Twilight" writers are Nicola Moscardelli (born in 1894 at Aguila) author of *I nostri giorni* ("Our Days") in which he shows the dull monotony of the life of a clerk; and Augusto Garsia (born at Forlì in 1889) who in his *Le strade cieche* ("Blind Roads") presents the dejection that oppresses the youth of Giovanni Caudia. The hero is a violent and neurotic character, who disturbs the peace and quietness of the little town of Romagna, where he returns after having lived a gay life in Paris. He becomes almost insane on seeing the uniformity of events and of people in the small town. He meets Chiara, a young girl who has been seduced by an artist and lives alone with her father. The interest which they find in each other surges into a violent drama as the girl looks upon Giovanni Caudia with the seriousness of a woman who wants to destroy her unhappy past, and Giovanni, despondent and bitter, is on a blind road. He drags Chiara along with him and as Chiara's hopes for a new existence brighten, his pessimism deepens. The novel ends with the woman reaching the point of hating the man who has blighted all her hopes. She goes to Paris and becomes a great cinema actress. When Giovanni Caudia after a long search finds her, she laughs at the man who had stifled every decent aspiration in her and had denied her even the joy of motherhood.

Several women, following in the footsteps of Giovanni Verga in all the resigned sadness that he gave to his characters, have produced fiction about quiet women living in the silence of a small town and crowding the narrow home in which their youth withers away with dreams of a love that never materializes. Maria Messina and Carola Prosperi, using this theme, have written modest but dignified fiction at which they have worked with seriousness of purpose and in which they have reflected the dreams of middle-class women tied to the humdrum life of the province.

Maria Messina (born at Messina, Sicily) has remained loyal to the Sicilian tradition embodied in Giovanni Verga. Her novels and short stories, *Piccoli gorghi* ("Little Eddies"), 1911; *Le briciole del destino* ("The Crumbs of Destiny"), 1918; *Alla deriva* ("Drifting"), 1920; *Le pause della vita* ("Pauses of Life"), 1926, express with an insistence that never generates weariness the sense of a dull life which is vividly illustrated by the very titles of her works. Life is nothing but a stretch of still waters, on the surfaces of which here and there small eddies create a momentary stir that makes the heaviness more pronounced.

Nothing illustrates Maria Messina's artistic ideals better than these words by Ada Negri in the preface to *Le briciole del destino:* "Yes, crumbs of destiny, scanty and meager, which life throws with destructive tolerance to the humble who do not possess the strength to offend nor that of defending themselves, those who cannot even display the tragic beauty of grave misfortunes. Crumbs of destiny . . . you have insisted on studying these bits of humanity, little nooks full of old dust, of old abandoned rags, of old cobwebs, of old rancid tears." [30]

One never finds a theatrical tone or veneer in Messina's novels. There is only a humble reality, which is, however, very rich in human pathos. In *Pause della vita*, Tina's grief at being abandoned by her husband is thus described: "Once abandoned, she realized with sorrow that she had loved him. In her own way. Without any sweetness. She was made thus, Tina, who did not wish to appear weak. If she chanced to have to mention him, his name died on her lips." [31]

Carola Prosperi (born in Turin, 1883) in her novel, *La*

[30] Preface to *Le briciole del destino.*

[31] *Le pause della vita*, p. 50.

paura d'amare ("The Fear of Love"), 1911, presented a significant book. We follow in it the sad existence of Benvenuta Plavis, a young girl who has grown up in fear of love that her mother has instilled in her. We find the same theme in *Fino al confine*, by Grazia Deledda. Deledda, however, shows a constructive mind by saving Gavina from her unjust fears, while Prosperi, who does not seek a solution for her heroine, sends her to bury herself in the province.

Benvenuta Plavis is a true character. Love mingles with her religious life, and we have before us an existence made up of passions and sufferings so human as to make our aesthetic interest constantly heavy with pity and sympathy. The province is merely a setting in this case. All the interest of the writer concentrates on the soul of her character, who after a moment of happiness knows nothing but a dull grief, that gnaws into it and tries to destroy it.

Most of this fiction is built around lonely Romagna, just as in the days of Naturalism Capuana and Verga wrote about picturesque Sicily. Moretti, Tozzi, and Mario Puccini are not attracted by what is picturesque. They seek only the drama of sad and sometimes tragic existences and their grief is of the nature of the tragic element of everyday life. For this reason their art is very humble, but full of the pathos of real life.

VII

THE NOVEL OF INTROSPECTION

WE are now considering a group of novels in which we find the analysis of characters who try to free themselves from a distorted point of view in order to reach a calmer outlook on life. After the artificiality of the superman, after the destructive period represented by Futurism, after the tragic laughter of the humorists like Pirandello and Panzini, there comes a moment of calm and of repose in the goodness of the earth and in the beauty of the stars. It is a deeper sense of intimacy, which we have already noticed in almost all of the significant writers of today: Pirandello, Panzini, Papini, Soffici, Moretti, and Tozzi.

This trait, however, stands out more clearly in a group of writers whom we choose to study separately because the desire of finding a new basis for their lives appears as the leading motif of their art, and it has received a fuller treatment by them than by other writers. We are considering in this group G. A. Borgese, S. Gotta, Maria di Borio, and F. M. Martini as representing this tendency.

In the writings of these authors one readily notices elements that distinguish the writers of this group from both the intellectual Papini and from the province-loving and sentimental Moretti. Papini is mainly and almost solely concerned with the intellectual life of his heroes. Here, on the contrary, we notice the attempt to free the hero from his intellectualism, life being contemplated in its more human attributes. As to Moretti, there is no goal in sight for him, since resignation to the oppressing sadness of life is not a real goal. In the writers of the introspective novel, on the contrary, we find a strong substratum of faith, a constructive attitude, and the characters speak of a more complete form of life in which the spiritual aspects of it are revealed to them.

This new sense of life changes from one writer to another, but, in the main, they all react against any intellectual or materialistic conception of life, following in the footsteps of Panzini and Pirandello. Some, like Borgese and Martini, veer towards a contemplative mood and bend their heads before the mystery of life. Others, like Gotta, turn towards action, action which is not negation of thought, but rather expression of it, and which puts an end to the torments of introspection, All these constructive attitudes are determined by the presence of a new faith in life, and they suggest resurrection after the decadence of the previous generation.

GIUSEPPE ANTONIO BORGESE

(Palermo, Sicily, 1882–)

G. A. Borgese prepared himself for fiction through a varied experience. He was a journalist, a critic, belonged to the group of *La Voce*, held the university chair in German literature at Rome, and was familiar with modern literature, especially German, French, and English. Before analyzing his own creations he studied and examined those of most modern writers: Tolstoi, Kipling, Romain Rolland, Verga, and D'Annunzio.

Passionate and introspective, like most Sicilians, he fashioned his own heroes after himself and after the men of his own generation who were engulfed by the tragedy of the World War.

In 1921, he published *Rubè*, a novel about a young man whose power of analysis is so overdeveloped that he is thereby rendered unfit to live. In this sense Rubè is a symbol of the decadent European youth that is exemplified in the doctrine of the superman. Rubè, however, shows all the misery of the superman, and in this sense Borgese is not a follower of D'Annunzio, but his very antithesis.

Rubè is a young lawyer who comes from Sicily to Rome with high ambitions. He has brought with him "a hair-splitting logic, an oratorical fire that destroyed the arguments of his opponents to the very bone and the belief of being capable of great things, a belief that his father had instilled in him."[1] By applying his inexorable logic to life, principles, and politics, he had become a physical and mental wreck.

He practised law in Rome in the office of the Honorable Taramanna, a cynic, who thought he had discovered the key to life in his indifference towards any moral issue. "'That is not life,' he used to laugh mockingly at the brilliant oratorical outbursts of Rubè, while he was eagerly wishing for his young partner to stop talking, so that he might have his usual game of poker. 'That is not life.'"[2] "Rubè used to ask himself what life really was, in the morning while standing before his mirror with eyes which, when he was alone, were deep and burning with hallucination, and which he later forced to be calm in order to appear normal to his clients and colleagues."[3] Questions like these were hidden under the perfect calm and heroic philosophy of the superman, and Borgese has the merit of having searched under that calm, of having unmasked the superman and discovered the man under the pompous rhetoric of that school. No superman ever looked at life in this manner: "Late in the evening, fitting his key into the door of his furnished room, he was seized by a sudden shudder as if he were about to see his soul like a circus-stand after the performance, with cigarette stubs and orange-skins scattered all around."[4]

As such, life appears to Rubè when the war breaks out.

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[1] *Rubè*, p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

He plunges into it desperately, just to still the inner torment of his thoughts. He speaks enthusiastically to his friends about the necessity of the war, and he proclaims that he will find in it the liberation of both body and soul. Yet Rubè knows that all this is pure rhetoric and the play of his imagination. He becomes passionately interested in war during a discussion, but when alone the subject fails to hold any interest for him.

This lack of genuine interest weighs on Rubè's life even in the minutest details and even in the most intimate relationships. His father dies, and he finds that his heart has scarcely been stirred. He is indifferent towards his widowed mother and his two sisters, in the same measure that he is unresponsive to the friendship of Federico Monti, a noble youth, against whom are projected Rubè's coldness and indifference.

When Rubè dons his uniform, he finds it impossible to remain in Rome, and asks to be sent to the front. From the outset he shows himself as unfit to be a soldier as he was a civilian. Borgese contrasts him with the other officers who like normal persons are waiting to be sent to the firing-line and meanwhile amuse themselves by admiring the young daughter of the innkeeper and by flirting with the girls of the town. "When he [Rubè] could, he stealthily left them in order to be alone. They did not seek his company, however, because they were very different from him." [5]

The novel relates Rubè's experiences at the front, then at Paris, then again back in Italy in the days of the communistic disorder in Romagna. A desperate failure, he meets death during a cavalry charge and ends a life that never knew the gift of spontaneity and sincerity.

Borgese does not admire Rubè. Indeed, he is hostile to him, and seems to find a bitter pleasure in exposing his weakness and insincerity. The coldness with which the

[5] *Rubè*, p. 29.

author dissects the Hamlet-like monologues of the hero gives one the impression that Borgese is seeking to free himself and his own generation of the excessively intellectual traits that he presents in Rubè. Borgese seems to contend with a fire in which there is a real conviction that all the evils that befall Rubè are due to the fact that there is a great lack of proportion between the latter's aspirations and his actions. Rubè is made to characterize himself as "a commonplace man, with a very destructive logic and too much imagination." [6] This confession follows him like a curse through the novel. Rubè destroys joy in every act that he performs by his autocriticism and by complicating the most simple human actions.

Let us study Rubè at the front, when he finds himself face to face with the stark realities of war. Borgese places the hero before us as the latter witnesses an air-raid. The human reaction to such an experience is *fear*, but Rubè is loath to admit it. He has proclaimed to his friends that he will be fearless before danger and death, and he is determined to live up to his boasting. We hear Rubè tell his friend Colonel Berti and the latter's daughter, Eugenia, that he actually was *not* afraid. Yet inwardly those words burn and torture him as he admits to himself that he *is* afraid. Is this merely a case of lying? It is infinitely more complex in the case of Rubè. It is a strange mixture of vain boasting and clear vision of the naked truth, which produces a net-work of despair strangely woven around the pitiful character. Rubè's anguish is described as if diffused over his whole physical being, with a striking relief that makes one think of the strength of the sculptor's finger forcing the clay to reveal his thought and vision. Behind the suffering Rubè we can see the pale, intense face of the author showing us that what Rubè lacks is humility to accept the logic of facts, the inevitability of human limitations, the everyday morality that is stronger and more heroic than the morality of the superman.

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[6] *Rubè*, p. 26.

The lack of these moral traits makes Rubè a sort of automaton who accepts life from the outside. He becomes the lover of and marries Eugenia Berti who had followed her father to the front, not because he loves her (as he realizes he is unable to love anyone), but merely because he is forced to do so by a series of circumstances, among which is a visit from Eugenia's brother. After being wounded, Rubè goes to Paris and falls in love with Celestina, the young wife of a French officer. Passively he returns to Italy at the end of the war. Passively he marries Eugenia, and after the tragic death of Clementina he, too, is crushed by a horse in a popular uprising of which he was a disillusioned and objective spectator.

In this fashion ends the superman, Rubè. Like Deledda, Papini, and Soffici, Borgese exalts humble reality and spontaneous human feelings. Rubè fails to possess happiness, love, friendship, religion, because he refuses to entrust himself to life, to accept life, to live in humility and sincerity.

Italian critics have been unjust toward *Rubè*, and Russo, Pancrazi, and Tilgher have failed to see that a great book was added to Italian literature when *Rubè* was published. Critics reproach the author with the very qualities which he attributed to Rubè. Borgese wanted to show the malady of a generation, and there was no other way than by presenting the symptoms of the malady. Borgese is in an attitude of constant autocriticism, and this explains the violence with which he attacks Rubè, his antagonist.

Nor have the critics noticed the constructive elements of the novel. Federico Monti's philosophy of life is a noble and uplifting program: "The future was entrusted to those men who were capable of believing in just things without expecting from their faith spectacular and universal changes; to men resigned to admit that evil was indestructible, and good was a feeble and vacillating divinity in need of being defended day by day with the last drop of blood of its defenders."[7] Federico embodies in these noble words his stoic sense of duty and a certitude which he had reached after having been very sorely tried. He had lost a limb in the war, and a little daughter has left to him this resigned idealism born of courage and clear vision of the stern realities of life. These things he tells Rubè shortly before the latter is killed, but the latter cannot understand him and he cannot live, because he does not possess any certitude at all.

In 1923 *Rubè* was followed by *I vivi e i morti* ("The Living and the Dead"), the novel that carries with it a stronger new faith. This theme is no longer a short and broken whir that is lost in the hollow roar of Rub`'s pitiful sophisms. It is a leading strain that dominates the whole book and presents a new aspect of Borgese's thought, his conquest of a pure and lofty faith in the spiritual destiny of man. The new hero, Eliseo Gaddi, declares in the closing words of the book: "The Earth is a green and blue pilgrim in space. And your soul is a pilgrim in time. The spirit has a boundless life not less so than what you call matter; and life is not all on the narrow surface of the earth. The soul sails forth from world to world in a way that you cannot understand. Eternity is promised to you and you do not know what it is; the resurrection of the dead is promised to you and you do not know what it is. The consciousness of yourself, the memory of yourself, is a weak light that flickers and goes out. Gently and sweetly it will go out. Death is sweeter than sleep for one who lived his day with work and just thoughts. No, do not ask before the evening falls. Because it is not permitted, because it is not permitted. And do not ask whether God has his throne in the zenith or whether he abides in your heart, whether he is the Father of Man or the Son of Man. Because you cannot know it. Because you must not know it." [8]

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[7] *Rubè*, p. 305.

I vivi e i morti is a novel of contemplation, contemplation of life and of death, which leads to an inner peace, which poor Rubè sought in vain. Eliseo Gaddi, a projection of Borgese's calmer and more intimate mood, follows the way that both Dante and Goethe followed in their aspiration towards the Invisible. He reduces his inner life to sentiment, destroying the feverish work of his thought. It is the solution of the centuries, in principle, but actually it is Borgese's spiritual experience.

Eliseo Gaddi is a man who seems to be born to remain outside of the life of instinct, of the senses, the natural life of the normal individual. He is timid and gentle, like the heroes of Moretti and like Angelo Moscarda in *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, by Luigi Pirandello. Blue-eyed and pale, Gaddi has been born with a yearning for a higher life. He is the very antithesis of his brother Michele, the man of instinct and passion. Their looks, their words, their actions reveal this contrast. Eliseo is humble towards Michele and Michele arrogantly talks to his meek brother and threatens him. Eliseo has retired to his father's estate at Miriano, after having abandoned teaching. Michele is away from home, living with a woman whom he has not married and who has borne him two children.

Eliseo moves gently and timidly among people and even among trees and animals. He temporarily emerges from his pensive mood when, in response to the pleas of his mother, he leaves Miriano and goes to Venice. The beauty, charm, and youth of Illa Leri seem to offer to him for a moment a glimpse of earthly joy, but it is a fleeting moment and Eliseo returns to Miriano where his brother's sudden death compels him to re-enter his contemplative mood.

While he is at Venice, a strange person enters his life. Arianna Nassim, a friend of Illa, a sort of international wanderer who believes in Spiritualism. Eliseo, at first, while gently yielding to Illa's charm, tries to ward off Arianna's influence. He experiences a sense of hostility towards her. He wants to live and to love Illa. Illa so beautiful and young; Illa, whose lips are so soft and fragrant with youth. But his own temperament destroys that short dream and upon his return to Miriano he "lived a strange life, without friendship, almost shunning his acquaintances, reading at random, drinking in the life of the sea and of the sky. Upon thinking it over, he discovered that for him all places were Miriano,"[9] that is, he carried everywhere his contemplative mood, he lived in it, finding in it serenity and peace.

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[8] *I vivi e i morti*, p. 387.

As time passes, his mysticism increases. He lives with his mother, a quiet lady who still cherishes a religious concept of life. While the war was mowing down the best youth and manhood of Europe, the thought of the dead was a familiar one. Quiet, gray-haired Signora Fiora communes with them through the old prayers of the church; Arianna Nassim wishes to communicate with them through Spiritualism. Eliseo, too, is present at a séance, but his weak nerves cannot stand the strain and he falls desperately sick. For many days he hovers between life and death, and in suffering and pain he purifies himself of the last contact with the earth: his illicit love for the neurotic Arianna.

Convalescence comes and with it the desire to rise higher and higher towards the mystery which now appears near and clear to him. The mystery seems to merge into the light of the stars, and he loses himself in it when he hears the words which we have quoted and which express Borgese's faith in the infinite and invisible world of the spirit.

I vivi e i morti, a continuation of *Rubè*, is a great novel. Borgese reveals in it a tender, deep vein which he bared after having purified himself of all the false intellectualism of *Rubè*. There is an intimacy here which is derived from

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[9] *I vivi e i morti*, p. 201.

Borgese's new mood and which reveals itself in noticing the tender green of the spring, the coolness of the slow currents hidden under the deep verdure of the valley of the Po. "The poplars truly had on their tops a green dust, a tender down which was not visible as long as the light was uncertain." [10]

Maternal love is expressed thus in the book: "His mother looked at him for a long time, and it seemed to her that her son's face had become all at once emaciated and holy." [11] It had in fact; and for this reason Eliseo Gaddi could kneel bareheaded under the stars and hear the new words that descended from above to men who suffer and toil on the earth.

SALVATORE GOTTA

(Ivrea, Piedmont, 1887–)

Salvatore Gotta, in his cyclical novels *I Vela* ("The Velas"), followed in the footsteps of Giovanni Verga, who had expressed in his series, *I Vinti*, his interest and faith in modern life. Salvatore Gotta, too, aims at giving a picture of modern society as seen by his hero, Claudio Vela, a sensitive, introspective, and passionate youth. There is in Claudio a great deal of the torment of Antonio Fogazzaro's characters, in that he, too, is torn between sensuality and mystic aspirations, while his logical mind makes one think of Borgese's Rubè.

Gotta's cyclical novel, which, according to its author, is to be in twelve or fifteen volumes, is clearly divided in two parts: one called *Amori* ("Love and Youth"), and the other that bears the title of *Gli ammonitori* ("The Mentors"). These two periods of Claudio Vela's life are divided by the World War, in which Gotta served as a private and during which he wrote several of his books.

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[10] *I vivi e i morti*, p. 227.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

The series has a prologue in *Pia*, 1910. In it the author contrasts the traditional and the new Italy by presenting the peaceful existence of Count Pietro di Colleretto, Claudio's grandfather, and the restlessness of Giovanni Vela, a supersensitive and morbid poet, who marries Pia, Count Pietro's only daughter. Through this marriage she is whirled into modern life from the beautiful ancestral home, Vill'Ardesia.

The tormented existence of Giovanni Vela, that ends in suicide, and the grief of Pia, who loses her mind at her husband's death, form the background of *Il figlio inquieto* ("The Restless Son"), 1911. In it we meet Claudio Vela, the central figure of this and of the following novels. Claudio Vela has grown under the influence of a disappointed and embittered father and of a sweet, but weak, mother. His father was indifferent towards him when as a little boy he craved his affection. Later, when both fortune and his love for art deserted Giovanni Vela, and he wanted his son's affection and comfort, the latter already had problems of his own and refused to confide in a father who begged the affection which he had denied his child.

Claudio grew restless like his father and developed into a morbid being, who allowed his youth to be almost completely absorbed by love. An account of his youth we find in *La più bella donna del mondo* ("The Most Beautiful Woman in the World"), 1917, and in *L'amante provinciale* ("The Mistress"), 1918.

The war brought a new light to Claudio Vela. *I tre mondi* ("The Three Worlds"), 1921, deals with Claudio's redemption from his restless and aimless existence. The Claudio who has wasted his gifted youth by being a sort of dilettante in art, in religion, in every act of his existence, is thus presented in this novel: "Back from war, he had felt a new soul in him, kindled by one passion: to unify his moral, artistic, and political aspirations." This is the new

Claudio, whom war has redeemed from a morbid conception and manner of living.

In the novels that preceded *I tre mondi*, Gotta bore a certain resemblance to the decadent writers who continued the ways of D'Annunzio. Beside depicting the negative existence of Claudio Vela, he seemed to delight in the negative traits of the hero. In fact, Claudio was a perfect specimen of the youth which is exemplified in the novels of Zuccoli or those of Da Verona. When almost a child he yielded to his passion for Furia, an older woman, who clouded the serenity of his adolescence by awakening passion in it. For a whim, he made Juana, a noble-minded girl, his mistress. But to satisfy his craving for an erotic adventure he passed from Juana to Lula, a romantic girl who went to him on the very eve of her marriage to an extremely prosaic individual. These themes which form the main content of *La più bella donna del mondo* and of *L'amante provinciale* are too sentimental to be reconciled with the more serious works of Gotta.

We are not discussing the intrinsic merits of these happenings. We merely state that Gotta in some of his tales presented a weakness with which he was entirely in sympathy. However, under the violent passions of Gotta's characters there looms a sense of humanity which the decadent writers we have studied never knew. Passion is not a stereotyped activity in the case of Gotta; it is an integral part of life, in that it clashes with moral and religious sentiments, thus acquiring a human and dramatic note.

From the very beginning Gotta fashioned characters that bore the stigmata of a passion for life, even in their morbidity. Giovanni Vela is thus presented: "His life had passed drop by drop through the filter of melancholy. There was in him a continuous strong desire to manifest a manly will, to enclose his dreams in a lasting work of art, and there was in him, likewise, an uncertainty that paralyzed him the very moment that he tried to translate his will into action, his thought into work." [12] This characteristic is also found in Claudio, who in the very midst of his love adventures is always a man and not an abstraction. When he gives up his relations with Furia he exclaims: "'There, I have decided! It is done!' There was on the table a picture of his father, still young, with a sarcastic smile in his naturally soft eyes and on his embittered lips. 'You would not have done so. You would not have known how to resist.'" [13] It is thus that, through the fog of passions that envelops Claudio's adolescence, Gotta reveals the moral courage of his hero.

From Claudio's passionate and wavering youth there rises another force that his father had not known: faith, a mystic aspiration towards something loftier than the voice of instinct. Even his father has noticed it in Claudio and, unable to understand it, had drifted farther from his son. He writes in his diary: "Claudio, can it be true that you have faith? That makes me laugh and almost offends me, because I do not find around me any prop on which to lean, and everything crumbles around me." [14]

It is the same with Gotta's women. Although highly emotional they are redeemed by their sincerity and by the grief that surrounds their love like a dark halo. One never finds in Gotta the formula so generally found in mediocre fiction of passion for passion's sake, which makes the story easily degenerate into the commonplace. Furia, the most ardent of Gotta's women, finds in her love for Claudio her whole existence. When she loses him, she wanders into the house of an anarchist, a workingman, who out of pity allows her to die there. Juana, although attracted to Claudio, is above his desire, and Gotta has described in an exquisite and delicate fashion her affection for Claudio.

The best of Gotta's novels is *I tre mondi*. There is in it something solid and concrete which did not exist in the former novels. Claudio is no longer a decadent. He is in search of a basis for his own existence and he finds it in thought, action, in work and, above all, in the traditions of his ancestors. Back from the front, he witnesses in Milan ghastly suffering and wanton joy by visiting hospitals and places of amusement. He is filled with an unspeakable pity and sympathy. The war has lifted him above the excitement and the worldliness of pleasure, and he has been helped especially by his friend Mario, whom the war has blinded and disfigured, but also spiritualized. Mario loved Mina, whom Claudio meets and for whom he feels a growing attraction that gradually changes into a tender and beautiful love. Mario wants them to marry and they do so after the sudden death of their friend.

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[12] *Il figlio inquieto*, p. 46.

[13] *La più bella donna del mondo*, p. 121.

[14] *Il figlio inquieto*, p. 393.

Gotta presents in this novel the light and darkness, the violent passions and the noble aspirations of post-war Italy. Claudio analyzes thus the state of mind of the men who have gone through the war: "It is precisely in our brain that we are perturbed. Our understanding of pre-war days is of no use to us. This is our torment: to find the new logic that holds the minds of the million youths who have survived." [15]

We have in this novel, moreover, a definite program of action, which consists in finding a new outlook on life for Claudio. His youth had been like a destructive storm. The very roots of his existence, his home traditions, had been wiped out, and this had produced a dangerous void. Now he works, and he buys back Vill'Ardesia, where he goes to live with Mina, his wife, and with his mother, who has recovered her reason.

The book marks a moment of calm and serenity in the life of Gotta. The nobility of his characters, the calm which envelops their lives, the very form of the novel, limpid and balanced, express the inner harmony of Gotta's spirit conquering through the stormy life of Claudio Vela.

[15] *I tre mondi*, p. 59.

Claudio Vela continues to appear in Gotta's later fiction. In *Il primo re* ("The First King"), 1922, Gotta presents the noble figure of Arduino di Ivrea, who was crowned King of Italy in 1102 at Pavia. The aim of the author is to exalt the value of tradition and to express his faith in the aristocracy typified in the man who was equally great in the art of war and in that of peace. He is to be Claudio's ideal, now that the latter has taken an active part in political life.

Il primo re has been followed by a series of novels: *La donna mia* ("My Wife"), 1924; *Lula—la bufera infernal* ("Lula—the Infernal Storm"), 1925; *Ombra, la moglie bella* ("Ombra, the Beautiful Wife"), 1926; *Il nome tuo* ("Thy Name"), 1927; *La sagra delle vergini* ("The Festival of the Virgins"), 1928. In them, the author studies, above all, the theme of conjugal love in depicting the painful adventures of Claudio and Mina, and of another couple, Dario and Ombra, distant cousins of the Velas.

Claudio lives now at Vill'Ardesia and is busy studying the problem of rural life in Piedmont and defending the rights of the farmer against the co-operatives and syndicates which menace his individuality and even his existence. In spite of a life of thought and activity, Claudio is still the unstable man whom we have known in the earlier novels. His passionate temperament is often stronger than his idealism, and only a woman possessed of Mina's moral strength can keep alive her faith in him.

Dario Guarnieri is the main character of the last volume of the series, *La sagra delle vergini*. He is an engineer and a man of action. After a restless youth, he marries Ombra and lives entirely absorbed in his work. An American girl, Priprì, with whom he falls in love, awakens in him the dormant freedom of the male, making him restless and bringing unhappiness to Ombra, Claudio and Mina.

The novel is projected against the atmosphere of the gay resorts of Northern Italy near Rapallo, and there circulates in it the consideration of the moral problem of a class which is extremely sensitive and which no longer knows the barriers of social laws and prejudices.

The modern girl is perfectly portrayed in Pripri and her emotional life is sympathetically and beautifully studied. Pripri has remained wholesome and good in spite of the worldly life that she has lived. She confesses: "With an almost comical wonder, not possible in those who have a bad opinion of the girl of today, I discovered in myself a childish simplicity, a tenderness, a longing, a melancholy which were in sharp contrast with the experiences of a young lady who knew the world and had been held in the arms of at least two thousand dancing partners." [16]

When she meets Dario Guarnieri she is strongly attracted to him. He had left Italy when very young for a reason that no character of the fiction of twenty-five years ago would have known: Dario had gone to America in order "not to become the lover of a Roman princess for whom he had had a deep affection from childhood and who was the wife of his benefactor." [17] Upon returning to Italy, after the death of the princess, Dario has married her daughter, Ombra.

The drama which is created by the interest that Pripri and Dario find in each other does not remain a mystery. Ombra, Claudio, and Mina live in a tense atmosphere of waiting and of sorrow while the two lovers struggle against themselves and against social and moral ties. Pripri is helped to master her passion for Dario by the friendship of Gianni, a young man and a promising writer who finally falls in love with her and wins her.

It is readily seen that Gotta presents here problems which arise directly from the intimate life of his characters. Here, too, we find the well-known triangle of wife, husband and lover, but Gotta's interest is antithetical to that of the artists of a few decades ago. For the latter, the triumph of the lover served as a climax to a story which purposed to show the power of primitive instincts. For Gotta, the struggle leads to a grievous and dramatic victory over instinct, due partly to a sense of responsibility and faith, and partly to the realization that bitterness is hidden in the dregs of pleasure.

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[16] *La sagra delle vergini*, p. 37, 38.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Gotta's technique has made great strides in his latest novels. The quaint but somewhat nebulous rendering of nature and of characters of the author's first attempt at fiction, *Pia*, has given place to an art which is so limpid and vigorous as to enable the author to avoid prolixity in depicting the images which fluctuate in his mind. "The valley had already sunk into the darkness, but against a background of pale blue there rose the white peaks of the distant, gigantic Alps."[18] The countryside of Ivrea appears thus to Ombra and Priprì, who are hastening to Vill'Ardesia in an automobile: "There came towards us the profiles of the mountains in the hour of sunset, purple against a sky misty because of the heat; profiles of sleeping giants, forms of immense women, reclining; gentle declivities, villages, vineyards, orchards and houses, numberless houses, bridges on silver brooks, ruins of ancient castles."[19]

The analysis of his characters has, likewise, become more direct. The reader constantly receives the impression that the author is drawing from actual experience in depicting the struggle that torments the heart and mind of his characters. The tendency towards confession has become more and more evident in Gotta's fiction until in *La sagra delle vergini* all the characters are made to speak in the first person while revealing their feelings.

Gotta attracts the attention of the critic through his cyclical novel, at which he has worked patiently and carefully. Using the experiences of modern man in the atmosphere of post-war days when men are striving to make life normal again, he has created a fiction in which the sense of moral elevation redeems his characters from the fickleness of their sentiment and from the weakness of their human nature.

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[18] *La sagra delle vergini*, p. 12.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

MARIA DI BORIO

(Turin, Piedmont)

One hesitates to place Maria di Borio in close proximity to writers like Papini, Borgese, Martini, and Gotta. Her characters are apparently not endowed with the intellectualism and the reflective mood of these writers. Nevertheless, one soon discovers that her heroes, in the varied play of spiritual contrasts that they offer, have many traits in common with the characters of the introspective writers of today.

Maria di Borio's women, pictured against the background of home life, fight courageously to keep their husbands' love, but they do this in the name of their children and their home, while their femininity is closely woven with their intellectual life. In this fashion the author eliminates exotic and sentimental elements from her works, divesting love of the melodramatic tone and character that fiction has so frequently assigned to it. Her pensive and sensitive temperament naturally leads her to depict intellectual and spiritual situations in which a deep sense of harmony is ever present without engendering that popular form of idealism which is generally characterized as optimism. "If to be an optimist means not to see evil, and not to feel the presence of suffering, I am not an optimist," [20] says a gentle and gray-haired lady to her romantic sister in one of Maria di Borio's novels.

This characteristic is shared by most of her heroes and heroines. They are true *realists*, in that, although they constantly reach out toward a more perfect mode of existence, they are fully conscious of the relativity of human achievements. Nevertheless di Borio's characters, especially her women, are not abstract and cold creatures. They defy and spurn social conventions and they only listen to the inner urge of the moral code which is within them. They are the very essence of femininity, passionate with the passion of sentiment rather than of the senses.

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[20] *E sopra il monte il Signore provvederà*, p. 90.

Such is the case with Guglielmina Laziale, the main character in *Una moglie* ("A Wife"), 1909. Having heard the composition of a great musician, Federico Laziale, she falls in love with him and writes to him, telling him of her love. She becomes thus his wife. When a temptress, Victoria MacDonald, threatens to steal her husband from her, the gentle lady does not hesitate to fight for her rights and for the rights of the little child who is about to be born to her. In fact, she accepts an invitation to go on a cruise on the Mediterranean and tries to regain the interest and affection of her philandering husband by vying with her rival in elegance, wit, and intelligence. The temptress wins, since Guglielmina feels it beneath her dignity to prolong a situation in which jealousy and hatred begin to mar the serenity and nobility of her soul. Later, under the pen name of the "Unknown one," she writes an essay on the music of Federico Laziale. There begins between her and her husband a correspondence which leads him back to her and to her child.

One notices the same appearance of simplicity in *E sopra il monte il Signore provvederà* ("And on the Mountain the Lord will provide"), 1923. We meet the principal character as she seeks in her conservatory the last violets on an autumn morning. "She has something of the autumn violets herself, this refined and pale lady, whose temples are illuminated by an indefinable light in which gold and purple tones mingle. The ideals and emotions which dwell under that forehead have the same benevolent fragrance of violets." [21]

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[21] *E sopra il monte il Signore provvederà*, p. 21.

Such is Margherita Visdomini, adorned by the refinement and grace which di Borio's personality has lent to her. Her husband, a general in the Italian army, is away, he neglects her, and she devotes all her life to her three children. The author has drawn on her own mother-feelings to present them to the reader. Margherita's family consists of two young girls and a boy, Mario. He represents the adolescent whose childhood was saddened by the tragedy of the World War. He is sensitive, silent, determined, and as such he brings into Italian fiction a new character. With him we meet Vaghetta, the oldest sister. "Her youth shone gloriously in the candor of her face, animated, fresh, wholesome as a white rose; in the harmonious curve of her shoulders, of her bare arms."[22] She has inherited her mother's loveliness and her pensive temperament, a touch of English beauty and a type that descends directly from English influence, since Maria di Borio is wont to place English characters in all her novels.

Margherita is pictured in the serenity and stateliness of the northern Italian landscape, and she lives among the memories of her noble ancestors. There is in the novel all the poetry of the home. "O our home, Vaghetta, look at it! Does it not seem to you that it smiles at us from the distance? Where could we find another home like this with all the love that it seems to feel for us?"[23] And again: "Home is the most precious possession of us women. The home must stimulate and increase all the artistic tendencies that are in us."[24] Margherita's life, in fact, is devoted to creating a home and her anxiety about her husband infuses an element of deep and intimate drama in the novel.

Roberto, her husband, is not the superficial type that we have met in *Una moglie*, a man who is unfaithful through instability of sentiment. His restlessness is of a nature that transcends the usual masculine weakness, which shows that di Borio has felt the new possibilities of art and life so poignantly as to rise above the triviality of the commonplace solution of man's uneasiness and restlessness. Roberto is the embodiment of that part of Italy's manhood that was caught in the storm of the war and could not altogether grasp the new values that life had assumed before them. There is an antagonism between him and his son. The older man moves in a perplexity which makes him hostile to the assuredness with which the young hands of his son grasp life. There are political reasons, religious motives, and diversity of temperaments which contribute to this breach between father and son.

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[22] *E sopra il monte il Signore provvederà*, p. 19.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Out of these contrasts, however, there grows a drama which culminates in the fulfilment of Margherita's ardent hopes. She has waited for her husband for years, and finally he, after much wandering and struggling, comes definitely back to his native Piedmont, happy to rest with the one who helped him to carry the weight of his life.

Maria di Borio has made live again in Mario her own son whom she lost in the war. The closeness between mother and son in the novel has all the simplicity and pathos of a true relationship.

Maria di Borio's last novel, *I due padroni del mondo* ("The Two Masters of the World"), 1926, portrays the post-war man who has succeeded in finding a new meaning in life. "Heretofore I felt outside of life, now I feel within life," [25] says Casimiro Monforte, the descendant of a noble northern family and the main character in the novel.

Here again are depicted in sharp contrast two generations, that of Casimiro and that of his father. The latter has lived a profligate life but becomes paralytic and repents. His son has gone through the war and has been severely wounded. He meets Giovanna Corleto, a wealthy girl whom he knew during his university years, and they marry. Soon a struggle begins. Giovanna, accustomed to luxuries, loves gay society life. Casimiro, introspective and thoughtful, preoccupied by the problems of the day and by the responsibilities of his social position, cannot follow her. They gradually drift apart, very much in the same manner as do Franco and Luisa in *Piccolo mondo antico* by Antonio Fogazzaro. Casimiro and Giovanna are finally reunited by a letter written by Casimiro to his wife in which he reveals to her his desire to be worthy of the message that youth has found in the war. "What did the best of us feel in the depths of our heart? That we were performing a great duty, that we were beginning a marvelous moral action." [26] This is Casimiro's faith and in this faith lives the grief and resignation of a mother who gave her son in the hope of a better life. "If it is not meaningless to say that our heroes did not die in vain, it is incumbent upon us to act and to fill with work our lives which were spared." [27] Casimiro wishes to work among the peasants, in the country, where the manor of his ancestors reminds him of his duties and the benevolent daylight of the goodness of Nature.

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[25] *I due padroni del mondo*, p. 239.

The fundamental theme in *I due padroni del mondo* is the contrast between money and love. It is a trite one and in the hands of a superficial writer would have degenerated into a commonplace story. Maria di Borio has enriched it with the deep meaning that she lends to the simplest human actions. "Money is not life. My life is love. My joy is to go with you, to fight to win you. And to fight even without conquering! To go up, and up, even without reaching the summit; even to fall, in order to begin anew." [28]

Maria di Borio has justly taken as a motto of her art a definition of Cardinal Mercier's: "What is a novelist? A seeker of magnificent and superior souls."

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[26] *I due padroni del mondo*, p. 233.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

FAUSTO MARIA MARTINI

(ROME, 1886–)

Fausto Maria Martini began his literary career as one of the "Twilight" writers, a friend of the timid Sergio Corazzini, of Marino Moretti, and of Guido Gozzano. The humble and monotonous themes of his *Poesie provinciali* ("Provincial Poems"), 1910, soon gave place to a lyrical fiction, in which the sense of the infinite is ever present. His deeply psychological art is in its own element in dramatizing and humanizing his ardent aspiration towards the world of the invisible which no one knows and only a few feel.

Martini's characters are the projection of his aspiration into beings who in the midst of the most ordinary occupations are suddenly seized by an indefinable longing. They have heard, like Pirandello's characters, the voice of the eternal, and this fact creates a tormenting dualism in them between their actual life and the higher life that they have perceived. They are transformed into unhappy, restless beings until they destroy their dualism and succeed in bridging the two worlds between which they are suspended.

The constructive trend of Martini's art is shown in the fact that his characters find the solution to the dualism that besets their existence on this earth. The author, in fact, lets the longing that they experience be appeased when a child and the warmth of love come into the life of the character. It is a constructive solution, in that the ideal takes on a tangible and human form. Woman, a tender child, nature, and especially the soft light of the stars, console Martini and his oversensitive men as they wander through the maze of life and hear a mysterious voice that reminds them of their divine origin.

Grazia in *La vetrina delle antichità* ("The Antiquarian

Shop Window"), 1922, a collection of short stories, is a typical character of Martini's. She is only nineteen and while on her wedding trip she sees the sea for the first time. The boundless stretch of water suddenly creates in her the longing towards the infinite. She is engulfed by an immensity in which the infinite seems to become tangible in the fluidity of the blue waters and the sea seems to acquire an invisible spiritual life. She becomes unspeakably unhappy, as if bewitched by the force of a weird enchantment. Her soul has heard the voice of the infinite, and she has become a pilgrim, a wanderer towards the mysterious fatherland. But there comes a day when Grazia, upon receiving within herself the precious weight of a new life, feels the presence of the eternal in the little child who is to be born to her, and her thirst is appeased.

The motif of the purification of love comes again with greater significance and force in *Verginità* ("Virginity"), 1921. Martini finds his new "virginity" through the agony of pain, through the ghastly carnage of the war and through a woman who shows him the way out of the tortuous sophisms of his youth. She gives him love, she makes him feel the spirituality of instinct in the child whom they call into the world and through whom a new horizon opens before the eyes of the writer whose youth has been renewed.

It is hard to know where fiction begins or ends, as the novel is woven on Martini's own life, although the hero's name is Paolo. Martini was seriously wounded in the war and when after a long struggle he succeeded in grasping life again, he felt in it a new substance. The book is a sort of trilogy: his distant childhood, the war, his new virgin sense of life. What strikes one most in the novel is the constant effort towards a synthesis in which all the contradictions of the writer's youth may be absorbed and destroyed. Few writers have expressed the purity of instinct and of love as Martini has done here. He has expressed in a luminous form the sense of affectionate and discreet respect with which we surround certain aspects of life for people whom we love. Maternity sings here a song of purity that refreshes and purifies one, while it allows the author to contemplate the embodiment of mystery in the tender little body of his son, who bridges for him the finite and infinite worlds.

In 1925, Martini published *Il cuore che m'hai dato* ("The Heart You Gave Me"). It is a sort of monologue in which Paolo addresses himself to his dead father, revealing to him the jealousy that gnaws at his heart. He is married to Elena, he loves her, he knows his love is reciprocated, yet jealousy torments him. Jealousy is hereditary with him. His father, too, a celebrated surgeon, knew its tortures and was not capable of conquering it. Though he fought against it, he broke the heart of Paolo's mother and ruined her whole life as well as his own. Paolo still remembers the day when he took his mother's part against his father, who persecuted her with his jealousy. He remembers how he threatened to take his mother away from home and how his father broke into tears like a child. Paolo did not understand him then; he does now, and begs his dead father to forgive him and to help him to extinguish the flame that burns in his heart, so that his life may be complete.

The novel is built on two planes: on one is presented the tormented life of Paolo's father and mother; on the other that of Paolo and his wife, Elena. From the closed chapter of the lives of Paolo's parents, there comes a voice of admonition and of solace to Paolo and Elena, who are walking together on the road of life.

There is also another source of courage for them—their little son. One night, standing at his bedstead, Paolo and Elena feel as one and their lives merge into a new harmony. Paolo reproaches himself: "I cannot help asking myself whether I should not be punished for having clouded too often with my restlessness the clear smile of my child." [29] He does not want to instill in him the germs of the disease that has embittered his own youth.

Through the contemplation of his son's innocence and his wife's devotion, love acquires a new sense for Paolo. "When I kiss Elena's lips, they are so quivering with life that —no, this is no illusion . . . I feel I have placed my lips on her very heart." [30]

At moments, however, the infinite life, life beyond Elena and his home, beckons to Paolo invitingly. It is the hour of temptation. "With what right does a human being pretend to epitomize in herself the whole of life, to satisfy a desire which transcends her?" [31] But he loves Elena: "My youth has been made tender and humble by her. When I feel her near me, I dare not look at the life which flames behind her and which still invites me." [32]

Using his parents' struggle as a theme, Martini has written pages full of pathos and real poetry. "Too often and for too long a time the images of your torment were reflected on my soul in my childhood. The passing of one of those dreams which, in the clear evenings of our early youth, purge the foreheads of children of every gloomy thought, will not be enough to quiet me." [33] His mother, in "her modest brown attire in which she looked so small as to appear a little nun of the home," [34] passes in the novel as a humble, yet great figure, living in sacrifice and in silence.

The attempt to concentrate his art on his own life, deriving the raw material of his fiction from his own experience, continues in *I volti del figlio* ("My Child's Countenance"), 1928. We must not confuse Martini's work with the *fragmentarism* of "armistice literature," when writers forced their inspiration by insisting on the smallest details and by magnifying them so that a common occurrence assumed gigantic proportions, affording a grotesque presentation of reality. Martini has lived too much, has suffered too much, not to feel the human element in the aspects of life that he studies. Even when he presents everyday situations and events, his longing for a more harmonious form of life instills poetry into his writings. Whether he portrays his marital life, or studies the different aspects of the face of his young son, he is always a poet and a man, his humanity restraining the lyric quality of his mind and directing it towards a synthesis of his tormented existence.

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[29] *Il cuore che m'hai datto*, p. 280.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

MINOR WRITERS

To the same literature which strives towards a synthesis and towards harmony belong several novels that have appeared in recent years. As in Martini's works, these young authors pass from a stage of dejection and gloom to one of serenity and calm by grasping a new sense of life; a sense which naturally varies with each writer.

Michele Saponaro (born at San Cesario, Lecce, 1885–) reaches his synthesis through the idyllic beauty of his country in the region of Puglie, enclosed on one side by the towering rocks of the Apennines and on the other by the waters of the Adriatic. In *Peccato* ("Sin"), 1919, he portrays a youth who, after knowing the spiritual misery of city life, returns to his native town and finds his liberation in the green and pure beauty of Nature. Its autobiographical tone gives a deep pathos to the novel, and one feels in it the real anguish and struggle of a man.

This motif of liberation and of rustic purity was later resumed by the author in *Nostra Madre* ("Our Mother"), 1921, in which, seeking a unity out of the chaos and among the debris of war, he points out Mother Earth as the only salvation in the same way as did Vergil in the days of the decadence of Rome.

Also Gino Rocca (born at Feltre, 1891–) is close to Martini's theme in his novel *L'uragano* ("The Hurricane"), 1921. Here, too, the war creates a great crisis in the life of Guido Colvago, who goes to it with a deep faith and only sees destruction and bitterness in it. He is a more complicated person than Martini's or Saponaro's characters, and for this reason more tormented. His drama is rendered more complex by his complete disappointment not only in ideals but in man. He is betrayed by Nora, whom he believed pure and lofty, and this discovery plunges him into a state of rebellion and cynicism, out of which he emerges only when he seeks peace in the bosom of Nature.

These themes, human and humble as they are, show that the wholesome part of Italian life has expressed itself in significant works that are woven out of thought, experience, projection into a higher life, torment of uncertainty and of passions, but ultimately of faith in the high destinies of man.

A novel of the soil which reminds one of Knut Hansun's *The Growth of the Soil* is that of Delfino Cinelli, *Castiglion che dio sa* ("My Beautiful Castiglion"), 1928, and one can notice in the novel of Umberto Fracchia, *Angela*, 1923, the attempt to introduce the humble figures of peasants. It is the return of "the fool of Nature" into Italian fiction, a character so common in English literature, but long banished through sophistication from Italian letters.

In these last years, the Nature theme has acquired a new momentum through a controversy that is still raging between two groups, one called *Strapaese* and another known as *Stracittà*. *Strapaese* ("Super-country") stands for a return to traditions which will free Italian language, literature, and temperament of all exotic elements. *Stracittà* ("Super-city") wants a universal culture in which nationalism should not find any place. *Strapaese* seems to be winning out, as it merges with the rebirth of Italian Nationalism and with the directness and simplicity which are essential and universal traits of modern life.

Its victory marks a literary fashion, which, in a sense, reacts against the universalism of the literature of the superman. It robs fiction, it is true, of the cosmopolitan character that it assumed with D'Annunzio and Fogazzaro but it forces the writer to exercise a direct and patient observation on Nature and on man, discovering in them a sense of humanity, which the literature of the superman never knew.

CONCLUSION

A NEW CLASSICISM

WE HAVE seen that in the lapse of time between 1900 and our own day Italian intellectual life has presented three distinct aspects. It was revolutionary and destructive with Futurism, 1909; it became disillusioned before the tragedy of the World War and it gave itself to a gross materialism with the literature of armistice, 1918–1920; it gradually resumed a sense of order and harmony through the fiction of Pirandello, Borgese, Martini, and Moretti.

We are witnessing in present-day Italy a new classicism, not in the sense of a return to the worship of the ancients, but in the living and universal meaning of the word. Classicism means, to be sure, symmetry and stateliness of form, repose and composure of thought, but these characteristics are determined by the presence of a dynamic and constructive state of mind, which destroys the restlessness and discomfort that man experiences before life when he sees it dualistic and contradictory. Classicism is, above all, a synthesis of the different aspects and forces which make up history and life. It presupposes a deep faith in the destinies of a nation and of man, and it appears at a time when the red blood of youth still courses in the veins of men. The great epochs of classicism have always appeared at a moment of national greatness, whether in the age of Pericles or that of Augustus, in the time of Louis XIV of France or of Charles V of Spain. In Italy, too, the political and national rebirth is being accompanied by the blossoming of a new and great literature. We do not say that the former is producing the latter; we state, on the contrary, that both are expressions of the renewed youth of the Italian people and of its dynamic mood.

In 1920 a magazine, *Il segnalibro*, addressed a referendum to the intellectual public. It was couched in these terms: "What predominating current will, in your opinion, follow the present one in which we are aimlessly groping in the dark?" [35] One of the answers, given by Gian Bistolfi, was: "It will be, I hope, a current of simplicity and purity. . . . The new literary current which will follow the present political and spiritual crisis will be represented by the new *enfant du siècle.* This legendary character, after having fought in the World War, has given himself over to a mad joy and now goes on the road to Damascus in search of a new pleasure or of a fabulous wisdom. For this reason he is destined to add another page to Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* and to discover in sorrow the meaning of truth and in pleasure only nausea." [36] According to another critic, Gian Dàuli, the new literature "will realize that there is in the world a drama, vaster and more interesting than the drama of our ego in relation to woman or art." [37] G. A. Borgese sums up the other answers thus: "Others speak of heart, passion, sincerity, austere and wholesome literature, a literature on the true experiences of life. All ask, as most important, books on a life truly experienced." [38]

The books that have been published after the date of the referendum fulfil, on the whole, the prediction and desires formulated in 1920. The new writers have searched into their own hearts, they have discovered the false ego that was hidden there and they have destroyed it in the name of a calmer and broader and loftier outlook on life. Pirandello's hero in *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, 1926; Moretti's in

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[35] Borgese, *Tempo di edificare*, p. 251.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

I puri di cuore, 1923; Borgese's in *I vivi e i morti*, 1923; Zuccoli's in *Le cose più grandi di lui*, 1923; Martini's in *Verginità*, 1921, show that there is in Italy a new literary and moral atmosphere.

If we read the annals of Italian intellectual life of these last years, we can see that every manifestation of it shows a sense of calm and order. Pietro Pancrazi, a friend of the group of *La Voce*, has remarked that in 1922 the so-called literature of the exotic (*letteratura d'eccezione*), which thrived during and after the war, had passed. It was the literature of free verse, free images, fragments, liberties of all sorts in defiance of every rule. "After the war we have seen them all compromise with rule. They are now obedient to tradition, to culture, to religion, to all forms and mannerisms of what they once condemned as bourgeois literature and mentality." [39]

The return to a calmer and more humble attitude towards the past and towards life is also evidenced by several literary movements which have taken the place of the erratic and bombastic Futurism. Very important is the group of *La Ronda*, which, under the leadership of Antonio Baldini, preaches a return to the lyricism and sincerity of Giacomo Leopardi. The return to the respect for tradition can also be noticed in Giovanni Papini, who, after much ranting against the past, proclaimed his admiration for Giosuè Carducci in his book, *L'uomo Carducci* ("Carducci, the Man"), 1918. Mario Puccini in his essay on contemporary literature, *Da D'Annunzio a Pirandello* ("From D'Annunzio to Pirandello"), 1923, confesses that his ideal writer is Alessandro Manzoni. *Sulle orme di Renzo* ("In the Footsteps of Renzo"), 1919, by Carlo Linati (born at Como, 1878–), is a glorification of Manzoni's art. Soffici, who called idiotic anyone who admired Italian classics in painting or in literature, has returned, sobered by war and by experience, to the technique of the Venetian painters and reads Ugo

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[39] Pancrazi, *Venti uomini, un satiro e un burattino*, p. viii.

Foscolo, a pure classicist. At Milan there is a literary society called *Baretti*, after the great eighteenth century critic, Giuseppe Baretti. At Siena a group of mystics was formed in 1918 under the name of *San Giorgio*, of which Federico Tozzi was an active member.

The many "conversions" of these last years point to the same state of mind. Giovanni Papini has recanted his atheism of the days of *Lacerba*, 1914, and has written *La vita di Cristo*, 1921. Marino Moretti has found in religion, as it abides in the silence and quietness of the home, a solace to his melancholy (*La voce di Dio*, 1920); Aldo Palazzeschi, an intellectual incendiary and a futurist, has written a hymn to the Virgin; Borgese is a professed believer, although with reservations. In the Italy of today one finds "believers" as frequently as a few years ago one met with persons who boasted of being "unbelievers."

These facts prove the idealistic trend of modern Italy. It is not the vague and negative idealism of the past that has prompted man to look disinterestedly at actual reality. Whether man stated that his true fatherland was in the future life (Transcendentalism of the Middle Ages) or whether he went for solace to the fables of mythology (Renaissance) or lost himself in fantastic regions created by his imagination to console him (Romanticism), he constantly attempted to evade the issue of accepting actual life in its entirety, as an indivisible whole which is constantly waiting the hand of man to be moulded into a more perfect form. Indeed, work was considered a punishment and a curse, and only in these last twenty years have its spiritual possibilities been fully appreciated. On the whole, this is the attitude of modern Italy towards the past and present as expressed by its representative men.

Today the ideal and the actual realities are no longer conceived in opposition, and Italy has joined in the universal effort to bridge them. The outstanding characteristic of modern Italian thought is its attempt to study the human spirit in its expressions: religion, moral ideas, art, science, social institutions, practical activity. In the past, and, in this respect, the Transcendentalism of the Middle Ages and Rationalism were alike, spirit was imprisoned in abstract categories, and it was considered an entity existing by and in itself wholly separated from its expressions and activity. The great Italian thinkers, Camillo Spaventa, Benedetto Croce, Giovanni Gentile, and those of the younger generation (Armando Carlini and Mario Casotti) are united by the attitude that spirit is in search of expression not only in the world of ideas and of the intellect, but in that of practical activity.

This tendency towards a constructive idealism seems to be the chief concern of a new school, *Il Novecento* ("Twentieth Century"). Its leader is Massimo Bontempelli, around whom many promising young men have gathered: Alberto Savinio, Pietro Solari, Corrado Alvaro, Orio Vergani, and Antonio Aniante. They publish a review called *Novecento* and they have a publishing house of the same name.

The goal of this group is to bring the light and force of imagination (*Madonna Fantasia*) into art and to create on a clear-cut, solid reality a "magic realism," as Bontempelli felicitously puts it. Art must for him "harmonize the external reality and that of the individual," [40] which is a new way of expressing the contrast between the "historical necessity" and the sentiment of man, who endlessly clashes against it. Bontempelli insists on the "lyric contact between reality and thought," and all his brilliant criticism constantly shows the desire to lower literature from the intellectual, even the metaphysical, plane, on which it abode for the writers of a few years ago, to a field in which the stimuli and the needs of the external and controllable world are readily recognized. He insists, above all, on the necessity of creating a "new art" and of using as a model the "new man."

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[40] Migliori, *Bilanci*, p. 62.

We are fully aware of the relative value to be attributed to such expressions. Manzoni, Verga, and Pirandello marked a departure from the art of their times, appealing to their sense of the "new," yet each outgrew and superseded the other and their "new" can now be looked upon as one of the many illusions that make up life. What a powerful illusion, however, if through it these great masters were capable of refreshing their concept of "man" and "life" as the raw material of art.

The present-day generation, as exemplified in the writers (we should only say critics) of the *Novecento*, wants action. Modern Italy is taking modern life seriously. These writers do not look upon it as a sad necessity forced upon us, but as a glorious adventure with infinite possibilities.

The profile of the advocated "new man" may still be vague and blurred, but certain traits have already appeared and distinguish him not only from the man of Verga and D'Annunzio, but also from that of Pirandello. The introspection of Pirandello, Panzini, Moretti, and Borgese, when studied in the attitude of their many characters towards life, points to the negation of "action" through the annihilation of thought. Angelo Moscarda in *Uno, nessuno e centomila* and both Rubè and Elio Gaddi in Borgese's novels actually give up thinking and renounce action. They become contemplative and they drown the torments of thought and life in a mystic musing. It is self-evident that a generation cannot go further than absolute inertia. So the generation of today has espoused the cause of action. Such a mood is represented not only by the writers of *Il Novecento*, but also by many others, among whom we shall mention Adriano Tilgher, who has exemplified it in his *Religion of Action*, 1923, and in *Homo Faber*, 1929. We read in his *Religion of Action:* "The god of the new religion is man himself, in that he never stops but incessantly moves, he never *is*, but continuously *becomes*, and while unceasingly becoming and ascending, finds his happiness in striving towards a goal which continuously changes."

A noble program is thus set before art. A fervid admirer of the new age wants art to analyze in man characteristics that have been forgotten for a long time: "honesty, sincerity, moral and religious elements, substantial seriousness, spontaneity and sincerity of moral action, sense of harmony, capability of selecting life-values."[41] Even more clearly the same thought is expressed by another enthusiast of modern art: Alessandro De Stefani, who hopes that "men of letters (*letterati*) may die out and their place be taken by writers." The writer is, to his mind, a man "practical, with an open mind, capable of seeing, understanding and expressing everything." He has to know the longing towards "new regions of imagination," and in his heart must throb "the desire of going on, and on, to advance."[42]

These are some of the symptoms which point to the opening of a new chapter in Italian literature. The critic of tomorrow will take these desires into consideration in reviewing the literary situation in Italy, in order to see whether these aesthetic formulae, which glow already with a burning desire of life, have been transformed into living characters. Thus far, only a few have timidly expressed this constructive trend. Salvatore Gotta and Fausto Maria Martini stand out among the others not so much for artistic achievements as for the attempt to let their characters find in action the goal of their existence.

In the production of today as a whole, however, Luigi Pirandello still towers above his contemporaries, and the traits of his introspective, intellectual, and tormented art dominate the significant works of contemporary Italian fiction.

[41] Maccari in *Tribuna*, Nov. 29, 1927.

[42] *Il raduno*, Feb. 18, 1928.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INDEX

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

CHAPTER ONE: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVEL

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

Alessandro Manzoni: born in Milan on March 7, 1785; studied in the school of the Somaschi Friars; in 1805 went to Paris, returning to Italy in 1810. He had married in 1808 Enrichetta Blondel, the daughter of a wealthy Geneva banker. A liberal and cultured priest, Eustachio Degola, brought Manzoni back to the Catholic fold. He remained to the end of his life a believer without bigotry and a patriot without chauvinism. In 1833 his wife died and within a short time six of his eight children. He died on May 22, 1873.

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Works translated into English: *Betrothed* (Macmillan, 1924); *Sacred Hymns and The Napoleonic Ode* (Oxford).

GIOVANNI VERGA

Giovanni Verga: born at Catania, Sicily, on August 31, 1840; left the island and lived in both Milan and Florence; died at Catania on January 26, 1922.

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ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

Antonio Fogazzaro: born at Vicenza on March 25, 1842, and died there on March 5, 1911; gave up law for literature; in 1866 married Countess Margherita Balmarana, whose wealth allowed him to devote all his time to writing; was made a senator, having achieved fame with his *Piccolo mondo antico*.

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Works translated into English: *The Saint* (Putnam, 1906); *The Sinner* (Putnam, 1907); *Woman* (Lippincott, 1907).

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

Gabriele D'Annunzio: born at Pescara on March 12, 1863; went to Rome in 1881; in 1910, left Italy and went to France, declaring Italians did not understand his art; returned to Italy in 1915 and became a national figure in his effort to have Italy join the Allies against the Central Empires. He was a daring aviator during the war, and in 1919 defended Fiume against the Allies and against the troops of the Italian government (December, 1920). He lives in his villa at Cardone.

Works: Novels: *Piacere* (1889); *Innocente* (1892); *Giovanni Episcopo* (1892); *Trionfo della morte* (1894); *Le vergini delle rocce* (1896); *Il fuoco* (1898); *Forse che sì forse che no* (1910); *Notturno* (1922).

Short stories: *Terra vergine* (1882); *Il libro delle vergini* (1884); *Le novelle della Pescara* (1886); *San Pantaleone* (1886).

Theatre: *Sogno d'un mattina di primavera* (1897); *La città morta* (1898); *La Gioconda* (1898); *Sogno d'un meriggio d'estate* (1899); *La gloria* (1899); *Sogno d'un tramonto d'autunno* (1899); *Sogno di una notte d'inverno* (1901); *Francesca da Rimini* (1902); *La figlia di Jorio* (1904); *La fiaccola sotto il moggio* (1905); *Più che l'amore* (1907); *La Nave* (1908); *Fedra* (1909); *Il Ferro* (1914).

Poetry: *Primovere* (1879); *Canto novo* (1882); *Intermezzo di rime*

(1883); *Isotteo e la Chimera* (1890); *Elegie romane* (1892); *Poema paradisiaco e Odi navali* (1893); *Intermezzo* (1894); *Canto novo e Intermezzo* (1896); *Laudi del cielo, del mare, della terra, e degli eroi* (1903–4).

Miscellaneous: *Contemplazione della morte* (1912); *Le faville del maglio* (1924).

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Works translated into English: *Child of Pleasure* (Modern Library, 1925); *Dead City* (Laird); *The Flame of Life* (Modern Library); *Francesca da Rimini* (Stokes, 1902); *Gioconda* (Dramatic); *The Intruder* (Modern Library); *The Maidens of the Rocks* (Modern Library); *The Triumph of Death* (Modern Library).

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(1922); *Tempo di edificare* (1922); Butti, E. A., *Nè odi nè amori* (1903); Cecchi, Emilio, *Studi critici* (1912); Cesareo, G. A., *Conversazioni letterarie* (1899); *Critica militante* (1908); Checchia, Giuseppe, *Poeti, prosatori e filosofi nel secolo che muore* (1900); Crémieux, B., *Panorama de la littérature italienne contemporaine* (1928); Croce, Benedetto, *La letteratura della nuova Italia* (1914); De Frenzi, *Candidati all'Immortalità* (1904); Donadoni, Eugenio, *Discorsi letterari* (1905); Donati Pettini, G., *Colloqui e profili* (1925); Flora, Francesco, *Dal romanticismo al futurismo* (1921); Garoglio, Diego, *Versi d'amore e prose di romanzi* (1903); Gigli, Lorenzo, *Il Romanzo italiano da Manzoni a D'Annunzio* (1914) and *Gazzetta del popolo* (Dec. 11, 1927); Gorgolini, P., *Italica* (1928); Groppallo, Laura, *Autori italiani d'oggi* (1903); Lazzeri, Girolamo, *Saggi di varia letteratura* (1922); Leoncita, A., *Scrittori del tempo nostro* (1928); Lipparini, Giuseppe, *Cercando la grazia* (1906); *Passeggiate* (1923); Majone, I., *Studi e saggi di letteratura* (1923); Manacorda, G., *Verso una nuova mistica* (1922); Mantovani, Dino, *Letteratura contemporanea* (1903); Marinetti, F. T., *Futurismo e Fascismo* (1924); Marone, Gherardo, *La difesa di Dulcinea* (1919); Martini, Ferdinando, *Pagine raccolte* (1912); Mastri, Pietro (Pirro Massetti), *Su per l'erta* (1903); Migliori, B., *Scribi, scrittori e artisti* (1923); *Nuova Antologia* (July 16, 1926) (negative criticism of contemporary literature); *Bilanci e sbilanci del dopo-guerra letterario* (1929); Morello, Vincenzo, *Nell'arte e nella vita* (1900); *L'energia letteraria* (1905); Muret, Maurice, *La littérature italienne d'aujourd'hui* (1906); Ojetti, Ugo, *L'avvenire della letteratura in Italia* (1896); *Alla scoperta dei letterati* (1899); *Raffaello e altre leggi* (1921); *Cose viste* (1923); *Scrittori che si confessano* (1926); Orano, Paolo, *I moderni* (1908–26); *La rinascita dell'anima* (1913); Oriani, A., *La rivolta ideale* (1909); Pancrazi, P., *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (1920); *Venti uomini un satiro e un burattino* (1922); Papini, Giovanni, *Ventiquattro cervelli* (1913); *Testimonianze* (1915); *Stroncature* (1916); *Gli operai della vigna* (1929); Papini e Pancrazi, *Poeti d'oggi* (1920); Piccoli, V., *Le notti novecentesche* (1925); *Anime ed ombre* (1927); Pirandello, Luigi, *L'umorismo* (1908); Prezzolini, Giuseppe, *Amici* (1922); *La cultura italiana* (1923); Puccini, Mario, *Lo spirito della nuova generazione* (1923); Rabizzani, Giovanni, *Bozzetti di letteratura italiana e straniera* (1914); Ravegnani, G., In *Stampa* (December

1, 1927); *I contemporanei* (1929); Rossi, V., *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Vol. III (1925); Russo, L., *I Narratori* (1923); Scarfoglio, Edoardo, *Il libro di Don Chisciotte* (1911); Serra, Renato, *Le lettere* (1920); *Scritti critici* (1920); Simoni, Renato, *Gli assenti* (1920); Soffici, Ardengo, *Statue e fantocci* (1919); Spencer, Kennard G., *Romanzi e romanzieri italiani* (1904); Squillace, Fausto, *Le tendenze presenti della letteratura italiana* (1899); Stanis, Ruinas, *La Sardegna e suoi scrittori* (1928); Tilgher, Adriano, *Studi sul teatro contemporaneo* (1922); *Voci del tempo* (1923); *Relativisti contemporanei* (1923); *La scena e la vita* (1925); *Homo faber* (1929); Thovez, Enrico, *Il pastore, il gregge e la zampogna* (1910); *Il Viandante e la sua orma* (1923); *I mimi dei moderni* (1919); *L'arco di Ulisse* (1921); *La nostra visione* (1925); Timpanaro, Sebastiano, *Scritti liberisti* (1919); Titta, Rosa G., *I narratori contemporanei* (1922); Toffanin, Giuseppe, *Gli ultimi nostri* (1919); Tonelli, L., *Alla ricercha della personalità* (1923); Tozzi, F., *Realtà di ieri e d'oggi* (published posthumous by G. Fanciulli, 1928); Valcarenghi, Ugo, *Sulla breccia dell'arte* (1903); Villa, *L'Idealismo moderno* (1906); Vinceguerra, M., *Un quarto di secolo* (1926); Vossler, Carlo, *Letteratura italiana contemporanea* (1916); Vaussard, M., *Sur la nouvelle Italie* (1928); Zocchi, Gaetano, *Scadimento del romanzo moderno* (1901).

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For the school called *Novecento* (M. Bontempelli, A. Savino, P. Solari, C. Alvaro, O. Vergani, A. Aniante): Fratelli, in *Tribuna* (Dec. 10, 1927); in *Tribuna* (Nov. 20, 1928); Gigli, G., in *Gazzetta del Popolo* (Dec. 11, 1927); Migliore, B., in *Bilanci e sbilanci del dopo-guerra letterario* (1929); Ravegnani, G., in *Stampa* (Dec. 1, 1927).

For the school called *La Ronda* (R. Bacchelli, A. Baldini, B. Barilli, V. Cardarelli, E. Cecchi, L. Montano, L. Saffi):

Migliore, B., *Bilanci* (1929); Puccini, M., *Lo spirito della nuova generazione* (1923).

For *Strapaese and Stracittà:* Maccari, M., in *Tribuna* (Nov. 29, 1927); Malaparte, C., in *Tribuna* (Nov. 28, 1927); Migliore, B., *Scribi, scrittori e artisti* (1923); Viani, L., and Ravegnani, G., in *Stampa* (Nov. 20–28, 1929).

CHAPTER TWO: A NEW EPISODE IN ITALIAN NATURALISM

GRAZIA DELEDDA

Grazia Deledda: born at Nuoro, Sardinia, in 1875; attended elementary schools only, and began to write at the age of eighteen; in 1900 married a business man, Signor Madesani, and went to live in Rome where she still lives; has two children, Sardus and Franz.

Works: Novels: *Anime oneste* (1896); *Il vecchio della montagna* (1900); *Dopo il divorzio* (1902); *Elias Portolu* (1903); *Cenere* (1904); *Nostalgie* (1905); *La via del male* (1906); *Il nostro padrone* (1909); *Sino al confine* (1910); *Nel deserto* (1911); *Colombi e Sparvieri* (1912); *Canne al vento* (1913); *Le colpe altrui* (1914); *Marianna Sirca* (1915); *L'incendio nell'oliveto* (1918); *La madre* (1920); *Il secreto dell'uomo solitario* (1921); *Il Dio dei viventi* (1922); *La danza della collana* (1924); *La fuga in Egitto* (1925); *Annalena Bilsini* (1928); *Il vecchio e i fanciulli* (1929).

Short stories: *Racconti Sardi* (1894); *Le tentazioni* (1898); *L'Ospite* (1898); *I giochi della vita* (1905); *Amori moderni* (1907); *Il nonno* (1907); *Chiaroscuro* (1912); *Il fanciullo nascosto* (1915); *Il ritorno del figlio* (1919); *Cattive Compagnie* (1921); *Il flauto nel bosco* (1923); *Il sigillo d'amore* (1926).

Theatre: *L'Edera* (in collaboration with Camillo Antona-Traversi, 1919); *Odio vince* (1912); *La Grazia* (in collaboration with G. Guastalla and V. Michetti, 1921).

Works translated into English: *After the Divorce* (Holt, 1905); *Mother* (Macmillan, 1923).

MINOR WRITERS

CLARICE TARTÙFARI

Clarice Tartùfari: born on February 14, 1868, of a French father, in Rome, where she still lives; dedicated herself to the novel, theatre and criticism.

Works: Novels: *Il roveto ardente* (1905); *Il miracolo* (1908); *Eterne leggi* (1910); *All'uscita del labirinto* (1914); *Rete d'acciaio* (1919); *Il dio nero* (1921); *Il mare e la vela* (1924); *Gomitolo d'oro* (1925); *La nave degli eroi* (1927); *Le lampade nel sagrario* (1929).

Poetry: *Versi nuovi* (1894); *Vespri di maggio* (1896).

GIULIO BECHI

Giulio Bechi: born in Florence on August 20, 1870; was a military man; fought in the African War, 1895–1896; went to Sardinia in 1899 to repress the brigands; participated in the Lybian War, 1912, and later fought as a colonel in the World War; died in August, 1917, of wounds received in battle.

Works: Novels: *I Seminatori* (1913).

Short stories: *Tra il bianco e il nero, bozzetti africani* (1898); *Caccia grossa, scene e figure del banditismo sardo* (1899); *I racconti di un fantaccino* (1906); *Lo spettro rosso* (1909); *Il capitano Tremalaterra* (1909); *I racconti del bivacco* (1914).

CHAPTER THREE: THE FOLLOWERS OF GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

GUIDO DA VERONA

Guido da Verona: born on September 7, 1881, at Saliceto Panaro (Modena); lives in Milan; graduated in law and traveled extensively.

Works: Novels: *I frammenti d'un poema* (1902); *Immortaliamo la vita* (1904); *L'Amore che torna* (1910); *Colei che non si deve amare* (1910); *La vita comincia domani* (1912); *Il cavaliere dello Spirito Santo* (1914); *La donna che inventò l'amore* (1915); *Mimì Bluette, fiore del mio giardino* (1916); *Il libro del mio sogno errante* (1919); *Sciogli la treccia, Maria Maddalena* (1920); *La mia vita in un raggio di sole* (1922); *Yvelise* (1923); *Lettera d'amore alle sartine d'Italia* (1924); *L'inferno degli uomini vivi* (1926); *Cléo, robes et manteaux* (1926); *Mata Hari, la danza davanti alla ghigliottina* (1927); *Azyadèh, la donna pallida* (1928).

Works translated into English: *Life Begins Tomorrow* (Dutton, 1925); *Mimì Bluette* (Dutton, 1929).

LUCIANO ZUCCOLI

Luciano Zuccoli: born in Milan in 1870; was an army officer in his youth; edited a magazine, *La Provincia di Modena* (1898–1900); was co-editor of the *Gazzetta di Venezia* for nine years; resided for a long time in Milan but later moved to Paris where he died in 1929.

Works: Novels: *I lussuriosi* (1893); *Il designato* (1894); *Roberta* (1897); *Il maleficio occulto* (1901); *Ufficiali, sottofficiali, caporali e soldati* (1902); *L'amore di Loredana* (1908); *Farfui, Romanzi brevi* (1911); *La freccia nel fianco* (1913); *La volpe di Sparta* (1915); *Baruffa* (1917); *La divina fanciulla* (1920); *Perchè ho lasciato Zina Scerkow* (1921); *I Drusbi* (1921); *Le cose più grandi di lui* (1923); *Hif Tebbi* (1923); *La straniera in casa* (1925); *Lo scandalo delle Baccanti* (1929).

Short stories: *La Morte di Orfeo* (1898); *La vita ironica* (1906); *La Compagnia della leggera* (1907); *La Marmotta* (1908); *Donne e Fanciulli* (1911); *Primavera* (1913); *L'Occhio del Fanciullo* (1914); *Vecchie Guerre, Vecchi Rancori* (1914); *Nulla di Romantico* (1915); *L'Oro e la Donna* (1922); *I ragazzi se ne vanno* (1922).

Miscellaneous: *Il Piacere di sognare* (1923); *La Vita elegante* (1925); *Il Peccato e le tentazioni* (1926); *Il Novissimo Secretario Galante* (1928).

Works translated into English: *Things Greater than He* (Holt, (1926).

VIRGILIO BROCCHI

Virgilio Brocchi: born in 1876 of Venetian parents, in Orvino (Roma); graduated in Belles Lettres and taught for several years in the Technical Institute of Milan; gave up teaching in order to write; lives in his villa called *La Serenella* at Nervi.

Works: Novels: *Le ombre del vespero* (1899); *Il fascino* (1902); *Le Aquile* (1906); *La gironda* (1909); *Il labirinto* (1914); *Secondo il cuor mio* (1919); *Netty* (1924); *Il poco lume ed il gran cerchio d'ombra* (1925); The cycle of *L'Isola sonante: L'Isola sonante* (1911); *La Bottega degli scandali* (1917); *Sul caval della morte amor cavalca* (1920); *Il Lastrico dell'inferno* (1921); The cycle of *Il Figlio dell'uomo: Il posto nel mondo* (1921); *Il destino in pugno* (1923); *La rocca sull'onda* (1926); *Il sapore della vita* (1928).

Short stories: *I sentieri della vita* (1913); *La coda del diavolo*

(1915); *L'amore beffardo* (1915); *Fragilità* (1922); *L'arcolaio* (1924).

Criticism: *Un novelliere del secolo XVIII: Girolamo Brusoni* (1897); *Carlo Goldoni e Venezia nel secolo XVIII* (1907).

FERDINANDO PAOLIERI

Ferdinando Paolieri: born in Florence in 1878. A great sportsman and a lover of the wild country of Tuscany; has written extensively on it; died in 1928.

Works: Novels: *Novelle selvagge* (1918); *Novelle incredibili* (1919); *La maschera celeste* (1922); *Natio borgo selvaggio* (1922); *I fuggiaschi* (1924); *Venere agreste. Voci della terra* (1924); *Amor senz'ali* (1926).

Short stories: *Scopino e le sue bestie* (1914); *Novelle Toscane* (1917); *Fiabe e Novelle* (1917); *Uomini e bestie* (1920); *Vita di tutti i giorni* (1920); *Il libro dell'amore* (1920); *Storia d'un orso e d'una gatta* (1922).

Poetry: *Venere agreste* (1908).

ANTONIO BELTRAMELLI

Antonio Beltramelli: born on January 11, 1880, in Forlì; was a journalist in his younger days; later devoted his time to writing; died in February, 1930.

Works: Novels: *Gli uomini rossi* (1904); *L'ombra del mandorlo* (1920); *Ahi, Giacometta, la tua ghirlandella* (1921); *Il Cavalier Mostardo* (1921); *I segni del fascino, confessioni a Pamela* (1924); *Fior d'uliva* (1915); *Gli Antùni, Il Passo dell'ignota* (1927); *Le Favole al principe ignoto* (1927); *I tre tempi* (1929).

Short stories: *L'antica madre* (1900); *Anna Perenna* (1904); *I primogeniti* (1905); *L'alterna vicenda* (1909); *Le novelle di Ceppo* (1911); *Le novelle delle guerra* (1913); *La vigna vendemmiata* (1919); *La locanda al bove solare* (1927).

Poetry: *I canti di Faunus* (1909); *Solicchio* (1913); *Storie d'immagini* (1917); *Cinerella* (1916).

Theatre: *La nave rossa* (1907); *Le vie del Signore* (1926).

Miscellaneous: *Il diario di un viandante, dal deserto al Mar Glaciale* (1910); *Un tempio d'amore* (1912); *Il Gregge senza pastore; Uomini, paesi e costumi di Romagna* (1913); *Paesi di conquista*

(1915); *L'uomo nuovo, Benito Mussolini* (1923); *Secchi e sberlecchi* (1927).

Works translated into English: *Piccolo Ponsi* (Dutton, 1925).

PIETRO ROSSO DI SAN SECONDO

Pietro Rosso di San Secondo: born at Caltanisetta in 1887; has traveled extensively abroad, especially in Holland and England; is known especially as a dramatist although he has written novels and short stories; is a contributor to the newspaper *Secolo* and to many other reviews and magazines; lives in Milan.

Works: Novels: *La fuga* (1917); *La morsa* (1918); *La festa delle rose* (1920); *La donna che può capire capisca* (1923); *Le frange della nostalgia* (1924); *La mia esistenza d'acquario* (1925).

Short stories: *Elegie a Maryke* (1914); *Ponentino* (1916); *Io commemoro Loletta* (1919); *Palamede, Remigia ed io* (1920); *Ho sognato il vero Dio* (1922).

Theatre: *La madre* (1908); *Marionette, che passione!* (1918); *La bella addormentata* (1919); *Per fare l'alba* (1919); *Primavera* (1920); *L'ospite desiderato* (1921); *Il minuetto dell'anima nostra* (1922); *La roccia e i monumenti* (1923); *L'avventura terrestre* (1925); *Una cosa di carne* (1925); *Il delirio dell'oste Bassà* (1924); *La Zarina tra i coltelli; La danza su un piede; Notturni e preludi* (1926); *Le esperienze di Giovanni Arce, filosofo* (1927); *Febbre, Canicola* (1927).

GIUSEPPE BRUNATI

Giuseppe Brunati: born in Milan in 1881; formed a group of symbolists and edited the magazine *Musica e lettere;* went to the World War as a volunteer; lost a leg while in action; from 1900 on, has edited the newspapers, *Il Principe, Monarchia, Il Sabaudo.*

Works: Novels: *L'Oriente Veneziano* (1904); *Quanto mi pare* (1907); *Quaresimale* (1912).

Drama: *L'ignoto* (1897); *Sofonisba* (1904).

Poetry: *Due elegie per due grandi anime* (1902); *La parabola dello spirito* (1903).

MINOR WRITERS

ANNIE VIVANTI

Annie Vivanti: born in London in 1868 of an Italian father and a German mother; has written in English and French as well as in

Italian; became famous through a book of verse edited in 1891, to which Giosuè Carducci wrote the preface; has wandered from one country to another, her travel extending also to America; married an Irish lawyer, John Chartres, by whom she had a daughter, Vivien, who was a celebrated violinist at the age of twelve. Vivanti is internationally known.

Works: Novels: *Marion artista di Caffè Concerto* (1891); *Circe* (1912); *I divoratori* (1912); *Vae victis* (1917); *Naja tripudians* (1921); *Sorella di Messalina* (1922); *Mea culpa* (1917).

Short stories: *Gioia* (1921); *Perdonate Eglantina* (1926).

Poetry: *Lyrica* (1890).

Theatre: *La Rosa azzurra* (1900); *L'invasore* (1916); *Le bocche inutili* (1918).

Miscellaneous: *Giosuè Carducci* (1906); *Zingaresca* (1918); *Sua Altezza* (1923); *Terra di Cleopatra* (1925).

Works written in English: *The Hunt for Happiness; Mary Tarnowska; The Blue Rose; The Outrage; Ethel's Luck; Winning Him Back; That Man; A Woman's Part; The Ruby Ring; Princess Primrose; The Suburb of Parnassus; The Beautiful Man.*

SIBILLA ALERAMO

Sibilla Aleramo: born in Alessandria; real name is Rina Faccio; usually resides in Naples.

Works: Novels: *Una donna* (1907); *Passaggio* (1919); *Amo, dunque sono* (1927).

Short stories: *Trasfigurazione* (1923).

Theatre: *Endiomione* (1923).

Poetry: *Momenti* (1921); *Poesia* (1927).

Miscellaneous: *Andando e stando* (1921); *Il mio primo amore* (1924).

AMELIA GUGLIELMINETTI

Amelia Guglielminetti: born in Turin in 1885; poetess, novelist, and author of many short stories; lives in Turin and edits a magazine called *Le Seduzioni* ("Temptations").

Works: Novels: *Gli occhi cerchiati d'azzurro* (1920); *La rivincita del maschio* (1923).

Short stories: *I volti dell'amore* (1914); *Anime allo specchio* (1915); *Le ore inutili* (1919); *La porta della gioia* (1920); *Quando avevo un amante* (1923); *Il pigiama del moralista* (1927).

Poetry: *Voci di giovinezza* (1903); *Le vergini folli* (1907); *Emma* (1909); *Le seduzioni* (1910); *L'amante ignoto* (1912); *L'insonne* (1913); *I serpenti di Medusa* (1927).

Drama: *Nèi e cicisbei e Il baro dell'amore* (1920).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE REACTION TO NATURALISM

GIAN PIETRO LUCINI

Gian Pietro Lucini: born in Milan on September 30, 1867; graduated in law in 1892; tells us in his biography that, dissatisfied with the law, he turned to medicine and mathematics; died in 1914 of tuberculosis of the bone after lingering for many years.

Works: Novels: *Gian Pietro da Cuore* (1895); *La piccola Chelidonio* (1924).

Poetry: *Il libro delle figurazioni ideali* (1894); *L'epistola apologetica ai "Modi, anime e simboli"* (1895); *Il libro delle Imagini terrene* (1898); *Il monologo di Florindo* (1898); *Il monologo di Rosaura* (1898); *L'Intermezzo della Arlecchinata* (1898); *I Monologhi di Pierrot* (1898); *Per una vecchia croce di ferro* (1899); *Elogio a F. D. Guerrazzi* (1904); *Elogio a Varazze* (1907); *Revolverate* (1909); *La solita canzone del Melibeo* (1909); *La prima oradell'Accademia* (1912).

Criticism: *Il Verso libero* (1908); *Passeggiata sentimentale per la Milano di L'Altrieri* (1909); *L'ora topica di Carlo Dossi* (1911); *Giosuè Carducci* (1912); *Le nottole e i vasi* (1912); *Il tempio della gloria* (1913); *Filosofi ultimi* (1913); *Antidannunziana* (1914); *Enrico Ibsen* (1914); *Antimilitarismo* (1914).

ENRICO ANNIBALE BUTTI

Enrico Annibale Butti: born on February 19, 1868, in Milan; possessed a very versatile mind; interested in mathematics; later took up law but relinquished it to write both fiction and drama; died of tuberculosis on November 26, 1912.

Works: Novels: *L'automa* (1892); *L'anima* (1893); *L'incantesimo* (1897).

Poetry: *Il castello del sogno* (1910).

Theatre: *Il frutto amaro* (1893); *La furia domata* (1895); *L'utopia* (1896); *La sirena* (1897); *La fine di un ideale* (1900); *La corsa al piacere* (1900); *Lucifero* (1901); *Una tempesta* (1903);

Il gigante e i pigmei (1903); *Il cuculo* (1904); *Tutto per nulla* (1906); *Fiamme nell'ombra* (1907); *Le rivali* (1911); *Nel paese della fortuna* (1911); *Sempre così* (1911); *Intermezzo poetico* (1912); *Il sole invisibile* (1913); *Le seduzioni* (1916); *Le vie della salute* (1919).

Criticism: *Nè odi nè amori* (1903).

ARTURO GRAF

Arturo Graf: born in Athens, Greece, in 1848 of an Italian mother and a German father; as a boy he lived in Roumania, but later went to Naples to study law; was professor of Romance literatures at the University of Rome in 1874 and of Italian literature in that of Turin in 1876; was a very important figure in Italian letters, having distinction as a critic, as a poet, and as a novelist; founded with R. Renier the *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana;* died in Turin in 1913.

Works: Novels: *Il Riscatto* (1901).

Poetry: *Poesia* (1863); *Versi* (1874); *Medusa* (1881); *Dopo il tramonto* (1893); *Le Danaidi* (1897); *Morgana* (1901); *Poemetti drammatici* (1905); *Le Rime della Selva* (1906); *La morte di Caino* (1912); *La morte di Faust e l'assunzione di Mesfistofele* (1912); *Il volto dell'uomo, Pace, L'ultima Tule* (1913).

Criticism: The most important critical works of Arturo Graf are: *Delle origini del dramma moderno* (1876); *Studi drammatici* (1878); *Attraverso il Cinquecento* (1888); *Per una fede* (1906); *L'anglomania e l'influsso Inglese Italia nel secolo XVIII* (1911).

ALFREDO PANZINI

Alfredo Panzini: born at Sinigaglia on December 31, 1863; studied at Bologna under Giosuè Carducci; taught Italian literature and history at Milan and later at Rome; has a villa at Bellaria on the Adriatic where he seeks a refuge from the noise of the city.

Works: Novels: *Il libro dei morti* (1893); *La lanterna di Diogene* (1907); *Santippe* (1914); *Il romanzo della guerra nell' anno 1914* (1915); *La madonna di Mammà* (1916); *Viaggio di un povero letterato* (1919); *Io cerco moglie* (1920); *Il mondo è rotondo* (1920); *Il padrone sono me* (1922); *La pulcella senza pulcellaggio* (1925); *I tre re con Gelsomino buffone del re* (1927); *I giorni del sole e del grano* (1929).

Short stories: *Gl'ingenui* (1896); *Le fiabe della virtù* (1905); *Cos'è l'amore* (1912); *Donne, madonne, e bimbi* (1914); *Novelle d'ambo i sessi* (1918); *Il diavolo nella mia libreria* (1929); *Signorine* (1921); *Le damigelle* (1925).

Miscellaneous: *Saggio critico sulla poesia maccheronica* (1887); *L'evoluzione di G. Carducci* (1894); *Diario sentimentale della nostra guerra* (1924).

Works translated into English: *Wanted: a Wife* (N. L. Brown, 1929).

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

Luigi Pirandello: born on June 28, 1867, at Girgenti, Sicily; graduated in Belles Lettres and Philosophy from the University of Bonn, Germany, in 1891; taught Italian literature in a Teachers' College in Rome.

Works: Novels: *L'esclusa* (1901); *Il turno* (1902); *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1904); *Suo marito* (1911); *I vecchi e i giovani* (1913); *Si gira* (1915); *Uno, nessuno e centomila* (1926).

Short stories: *Amori senza amore* (1894); *Quand'ero matto* (1903); *Beffe della morte e della vita* (1902); *Bianche e nere* (1904); *Erma befronte* (1906); *La vita nuda* (1910); *Terzetti* (1913); *Le due maschere* (1914); *La Trappola* (1915); *Erba del nostro orto* (1915); *E domani, lunedì* (1919); *Un cavallo nella luna* (1920); *Il carnevale dei morti* (1921).

The Bemporad Publishing House is collecting all the short stories of Pirandello. The entire collection will consist of twenty-four volumes, each containing fifteen stories. The following volumes have thus far been published: I. *Scialle nero* (1922); II. *La vita nuda* (1922); III. *La rallegrata* (1922); IV. *Uomo solo* (1922); V. *La mosca* (1923); VI. *In silenzio* (1924); VII. *Tutt'è tre* (1925); VIII. *Dal naso al cielo* (1915); IX. *Donna Mimma* (1925); X. *Il vecchio Dio* (1926); XI. *La giara* (1927); XII. *Il viaggio* (1928); XIII. *Candelora* (1928).

Theatre: The same house has been publishing since 1918 the dramatic works of Pirandello in a collection called *Maschere nude*. The following volumes have thus far appeared: I. *Tutto per bene* (1918); II. *Come prima meglio di prima* (1921); II. *Sei personnaggi in cerca d'autore* (1921); IV. *Enrico IV* (1923); V. *L'Uomo, la bestia e la virtù* (1923); VI. *La Signora Morli, una e due* (1923); VII. *Vestire gli ignudi* (1923); VIII. *La vita che ti diedi* (1924);

IX. *Ciascuno a suo modo* (1924); X. *Pensaci, Giacomino* (1925); XI. *Così è* (1925); XII. *Sagra del signore della nave, L'altro figlio, La giara* (1925); XIII. *Il piacere dell'onestà* (1925); XIV. *Il berretto a sonagli* (1925); XV. *Il giuoco delle parti* (1925); XVI. *Ma non è una cosa seria* (1926); XVII. *L'innesto* (1926); XVIII. *La ragione degli altri* (1926); XIX. *L'imbecille, Lumie di Sicilia; Cecè, La patente* (1926); XX. *All'uscita, Il dovere del medico, La morsa, L'uomo dal fiore in bocca* (1926); XXI. *Diana e la Tuda* (1927); XXII. *L'amica delle mogli* (1927); XXIII. *La nuova colonia* (1928); XXIV. *Liolà* (1928); XXV. *O di uno o di nessuno;* XXVI. *Lazzaro;* XXVII. *Come tu mi vuoi;* XXVIII. *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (1930).

Miscellaneous: *Arte e Scienza* (1908); *L'umorismo* (1908).

Works translated into English: *Three Plays* (Dutton, 1922); *Each in His Own Way* (Dutton, 1923); *The Late Mattia Pascal* (Dutton, 1923); *Old and Young* (Dutton, 1925); *Outcast* (Dutton, 1925); *Shoot!* (Dutton, 1927); *Sicilian Limes* (Theatre Arts, Vol. VI, 1924).

ITALO SVEVO

Italo Svevo: born at Trieste in 1864; journalist and novelist; lived unknown for many years until James Joyce, Benjamin Crémieux and Valéry Larbaud revealed to the Italian public the importance of his works; died in 1928.

Works: Novels: *Una vita* (1893); *Senilità* (1898); *La coscienza di Zeno* (1921); *La novella del buon vecchio e della bella fanciulla* (1929).

THE NOVEL OF THE NEW GENERATION

BENEDETTO CROCE

Benedetto Croce: born at Pascasseroli (Aquila) in 1866; philosopher, man of letters and historian, he has edited since 1903 the journal *La Critica;* was made Senator in 1910 and was Minister of Public Instruction under the Giolitti Cabinet in 1920; his residence is in Naples.

Works: Philosophical writings: *Filosofia dello spirito,* four volumes (1904–1920); *Problemi di estetica* (1910); *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico* (1911); *Saggio sullo Hegel* (1913); *Materialismo storico ed economia marxista* (1918); *Nuovi saggi di estetica* (1920); *Frammenti di etica* (1921).

Criticism: *Saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Seicento* (1911); *La letteratura della nuova Italia*, four volumes (1914–1915); *I teatri di Napoli dal Rinascimento alla fine del secolo XVIII* (1916); *La Spagna nella vita Italiana durante la Rinascenza* (1917); *Conversazioni critiche*, series first and second (1918); *Goethe* (1919); *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille* (1920); *Storia della storigrafia italiana nel secolo XIX* (1921); *La poesia di Dante* (1921); *Storia d'Italia dal 1871—al 1915* (1929); *Storia della età barocca in Italia* (1929).

Works translated into English: *Philosophy of Gian Battista Vico* (Macmillan, 1913); *Philosophy of the Practical* (Macmillan, 1913); *Logic as the Science of the Pure Concept* (Macmillan, 1917); *Poetry of Dante* (Holt, 1922); *Aesthetic as Science of Expression* (Macmillan, 1922); *Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille* (Holt); *Benedetto Croce, an Autobiography* (Oxford, 1927); *A History of Italy from 1871 to 1915* (Oxford, 1929).

For information about contemporary philosophical movements in Italy see Crespi, A., *Contemporary Thought in Italy* (Knopf, 1920).

GIOVANNI GENTILE

Giovanni Gentile: born in 1875 in Castelvetrano, Sicily; graduated at Pisa in 1898; taught philosophy in several *licées* and then passed to the University of Palermo where he remained from 1905–1914; later went to the University of Pisa from 1914–1918; is now Professor of the History of Philosophy at the University of Rome; was made Senator in 1922 and was Minister of Public Instruction in the Mussolini Cabinet from 1922–1924; while in office he carried out the well-known reform of Italian schools.

Works: Philosophical writings: *La rinascita dell'idealismo* (1903); *Il concetto della storia della filosofia* (1908); *Il modernismo e i rapporti tra religione e filosofia* (1909); *L'atto del pensare come atto puro* (1912); *La riforma della dialettica hegeliana* (1913); *I problemi della scolastica e il pensiero italiano* (1913); *Teoria generale dello spirito come atto puro* (1916); *Il carattere storico della filosofia italiana* (1918); *Discorsi di religione* (1910); *Le origini della filosofia contemporanea in Italia* (1922); *Sistema di logica come teoria del conoscere* (1923); *Storia della filosofia italiana* (1919).

Criticism: *L'unità del pensiero leopardiano nelle operette morali* (1917); *Saggi critici*, first series (1921); *Frammenti di estetica e* *letteratura* (1922); *Dante e Manzoni* (1922); *Saggi critici*, second series (1926).

Historical writings: *Giordano Bruno nella storia della cultura* (1907); *La filosofia della guerra* (1914); *Guerra e fede* (1919); *Studi sul Rinascimento* (1923); *I profetti del Risorgimento italiano* (1923); *Gli albori della nuova Italia* (1923); *Riforme costituzionali e fascismo* (1924); *Che cosa è il fascismo* (1925).

Pedagogical writings: *La scuola primaria di stato* (1907); *Scuola e filosofia* (1908); *La riforma dell'educazione* (1920); *Il concetto moderno della scienza e il problema universitario* (1920); *La riforma della scuola* (1924); *La riforma scolastica* (1925).

Works translated into English: *Reform of Education* (Harcourt, 1922); *Theory of Mind as Pure Act* (Macmillan, 1922).

GIUSEPPE PREZZOLINI

Giuseppe Prezzolini: born in 1882 at Perugia of a Sienese family; self-taught, he has no academic title; in 1903, helped to edit the journal *Leonardo* (Florence, 1903–1908); from 1908–1914 he edited *La Voce* (Florence); was a volunteer in the World War; in 1920 was the head of the publishing house *La Voce;* in 1925 became connected with the League of Nations; is at present at Columbia University, New York.

Works: Criticism: *La cultura italiana* (1906); *Benedetto Croce* (1909); *La teoria sindacalista* (1909); *Vecchio e nuovo nazionalismo* (1914); *Discorso su Giovanni Papini* (1915); *La produzione libraria italiana durante la guerra* (1918); *Tutta la guerra*, an anthology (1918); *Amici* (1922); *Io credo* (1923); *La cultura italiana* (1923); *La vita di Niccolò Machiavelli* (1927).

Works translated into English: *Fascism* (Dutton, 1927); *Niccolò Machiavelli, The Florentine* (Brentano, 1928).

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NOVEL OF IDEAS

GIOVANNI PAPINI

Giovanni Papini: born in Florence on January 9, 1881; studied mostly by himself and spent his youth in reading in every field of literature; founded and contributed to the *Leonardo*, a philosophical magazine, 1903–1908, to *L'Anima*, 1911, to *La Voce*, 1908–

1912, to *Lacerba*, 1913–1915. Since 1907 he has been living in his villa at Bulciano in Tuscany.

Works: Fiction: *Il tragico quotidiano* (1906); *Il pilota cieco* (1907); *Parole e sangue* (1912); *Un uomo finito* (1912); *Buffonate* (1914); *Maschilità* (1915); *Giorni di festa* (1918).

Poetry: *Cento pagine di poesia* (1915); *Opera prima* (1921); *Pane e vino* (1926).

Criticism: *Crepuscolo dei filosofi* (1906); *La religione sta da sè* (1908); *Le memorie di Dio* (1911); *Stroncature* (1916); *L'altra metà* (1912); *Polemiche religiose* (1917); *L'uomo Carducci* (1918); *Testimonianze* (1918); *Esperienza futurista* (1919); *Vita di Cristo* (1921); *Dizionario dell'omo salvatico* (1923); *Gli operai della vigna* (1929); *Sant'Agostino* (1930).

Works translated into English: *The Failure* (Harcourt, 1924); *Life of Christ* (Harcourt, 1923); *Memoirs of God* (Ball Publishing Company, 1926); *Prayer to Christ* (American Press, 1926); *Life and Myself* (Brentano, 1930); *Four and Twenty Minds* (Harrapt & Co., London).

ARDENGO SOFFICI

Ardengo Soffici: born at Rignano sull'Arno on April 7, 1879; left school when very young and became a student of Beaux Arts, earning his living by illustrating books and magazines. In 1900 he went to Paris, returning to Italy in 1907. He allied himself with the Futurists up to 1914. He fought in the World War; was wounded twice. He lives at Poggio Cajano near Florence.

Works: Fiction: *Lemmonio Boreo* (1912); *Arlecchino* (1914); *Giornale di Bordo, diario* (1915); *Simultaneità e chimismi lirici* (1915); *Kobilek* (1918); *La giostra dei sensi* (1918); *La ritirata del Friuli, diario* (1919).

Criticism: *Il caso Rosso e l'impressionismo* (1909); *Ignoto Toscano* (1909); *Arthur Rimbaud* (1911); *Principio di una estetica futurista* (1913); *Scoperte e massacri* (1919); *Statue e fantocci* (1919); *Battaglia fra due vittorie* (1923); *Armando Spadini* (1926); *Carlo Carrà, pittore* (1928).

PIERO JAHIER

Piero Jahier: born on April 11, 1884, at Genoa of a Piedmontese family; studied theology in the Valdensian school in Florence; left it to become an employe in the state railroads, where he remained until 1911, when he joined the Voce Publishing House as an agent; graduated in law and in French literature; went to the World War as a volunteer. After the retreat of Caporetto, edited a newspaper for the soldiers, *L'Astico*, and after the Armistice edited *Il Nuovo Contadino*, through which he tried to foster a desire among the masses to cultivate the soil.

Works: Novels: *Resultanze in merito alla vita e al carattere di Gino Bianchi* (1913); *Con me e con gli Alpini* (1919); *Ragazzo* (1920).

Poetry: *Canti di soldati* (1918).

GIOVANNI BOINE

Giovanni Boine: born at Finalmarina on September 2, 1887; graduated in Belles Lettres from the University of Milan and took an active part in the modernistic movement. His chief interest lay in the study of mysticism. Sick and poor, he went to live at Porto Maurizio, where he died on May 16, 1917.

Works: Novels: *Il peccato e altre cose* (1914).

Miscellaneous: *Discorsi militari* (1915); *Frantumi* (1918); *La ferita non chiusa* (1921).

SCIPIO SLATAPER

Scipio Slataper: born in 1888 at Trieste, where he studied until he went to Florence to complete his education; graduated in Belles Lettres at the Instituto di Studi Superiori; later went to Hamburg, where he taught Italian at the Kolonial Institut. He returned to Italy in 1914; became a volunteer in the World War; was wounded and died on the battlefield on December 3, 1915.

Works: *Lettere triestine* (1912); *Il mio Carso* (*La Voce*) (1912); *Scritti letterari e critici* (1912); *I confini necessari all'Italia* (1915); *Le strade d'invasione dell'Italia in Austria* (1912); *Ibsen* (1916); *Diario di guerra* (1918); *Scritti politici* (1924); *Epistolario di Torquato Tasso* (Preface) (1924); *Diario di Friedrich Hebbel* (Translation) (1924); *Giuditta di F. Hebbel* (Translation) (1924).

MASSIMO BONTEMPELLI

Massimo Bontempelli: born at Como in 1878; graduated in Belles Lettres from the University of Turin; traveled extensively in Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Austria and Northern Africa;

went to war in 1917 and 1918. He first taught, then became a journalist at Florence and Milan. He now lives in Rome.

Works: Novels: *La vita intensa* (1919); *La vita operosa* (1920); *Eva ultima* (1923); *Il figlio di due madri* (1929).

Short stories: *Socrate moderno* (1908); *Sette savi* (1912); *Primi racconti* (1914); *Teatrino* (1917); *Viaggi e scoperte* (1922); *La scacchiera davanti lo specchio* (1922); *L'Eden della tartaruga* (1926); *Donna nel sole* (1928); *La donna del Nadir* (1928); *Donna dei miei sogni* (1928).

Theatre: *Nostra Dea* (1925); *Primo spettacolo* (1927); *Minnie la candida* (1929).

Criticism: *Il canto ventunesimo del Purgatorio* (1911); *Il canto ventiduesimo del Paradiso* (1913); *Prose di fede e di vita nel primo tempo dell'umanesimo* (1913); *San Bernadino da Siena* (1913); *Maria Melato* (1919); *Il neosofista* (1929).

MINOR WRITERS

VINCENZO GERACE

Vincenzo Gerace: born at Cittanova (Galabria) in 1876; a journalist, poet, novelist, and critic; studied at Palermo and was brought up in the cult of the Greek and Latin writers; went to war; lives at present in Rome.

Works: Novels: *La Grazia* (1911).

Poetry: *La fontana nella foresta* (1928).

Criticism: *La tradizione e la moderna barbarie* (1927).

FRANCESCO FLORA

Francesco Flora: born at Colle Sannita in 1891; critic and novelist; is connected with Croce's journal, *La Critica;* lives in Naples.

Works: Novels: *La città terrena* (1927).

Poetry: *Immortalità* (1921).

Criticism: *Dal romanticismo al futurismo* (1921); *D'Annunzio* (1926); *Croce* (1927).

CHAPTER SIX: THE NOVEL OF HUMILITY AND UNCERTITUDE

MARINO MORETTI

Marino Moretti: born on July 18, 1885, at Cesenatico, Romagna, where he makes his permanent home although he has lived in

Rome and Florence. In an unobtrusive way he has taken a direct part in all movements of contemporary literature and has been a constant contributor to newspapers and magazines.

Works: Novels: *Il sole del sabato* (1916); *Guenda* (1918); *L'isola dell'amore* (1920); *Ne bella nè brutta* (1921); *I due fanciulli* (1922); *I puri di cuore* (1923); *Il romanzo della mamma* (1924); *Il segno della Croce* (1926); *Il trono dei poveri* (1928); *Mia madre* (1928).

Short stories: *Il pease degli equivoci* (1907); *I lestofanti* (1910); *Ah, Ah, ah!* (1912); *I pesci fuor d'acqua* (1914); *La bandiera alla finestra* (1917); *Conoscere il mondo* (1919); *Adamo ed Eva* (1919); *Una settimana in Paradiso* (1919); *Personaggi secondari* (1920); *Cinque novelle* (1920); *Mia madre* (1923); *La vera grandezza* (1925); *Le capinere* (1926); *Allegretto quasi allegro* (1927).

Poetry: *Poesie scritte col lapis* (1910); *Poesia di tutti i giorni* (1911); *I poemetti di Marino* (1913); *Il giardino dei frutti* (1916).

FEDERIGO TOZZI

Federigo Tozzi: born on January 2, 1883, in Siena; was self-taught; left his father and found a position with the state railroads; at his father's death returned to Siena and cultivated his small farm that he later sold in order to go to Rome to find a publisher; died in 1919.

Works: Novels: *Con gli occhi chiusi* (1919); *Tre croci* (1920); *Il Podere* (1921); *Gli egoisti* (1923).

Short stories: *Bestie* (1917); *L'amore* (1920); *Ricordi di un impiegato* (1927).

Poetry: *La zampogna verde* (1911); *La città della vergine* (1913).

Theatre: *Verità* (1920); *L'incalco* (1923).

Miscellaneous: *Antologia di antichi scrittori senesi* (1913); *Mascherate e strambotti della congrega dei Rozzi* (1915); *Le cose più belle di Santa Caterina da Siena* (1920); *Realtà di ieri e di oggi* (1928).

MARIO PUCCINI

Mario Puccini: born on July 29, 1887; dedicated himself to literature not only as an author but as an editor and journalist; his productivity has been and is amazing; took part in the World War and was decorated for valor.

Works: Novels: *La vergine e la mondana* (1920); *Io sono tuo figlio* (1920); *Viva l'anarchia* (1921); *Dove è il peccato è Dio*

(1922); *Uomini deboli e uomini forti* (1922); *Cola o il ritratto dell'Italiano* (1927).

Short stories: *La canzone della mia follìa* (1909); *Foville* (1914); *Essere o non essere* (1920); *Novelle del tempo migliore* (1922); *L'inganno della carne* (1923); *La vera colpevole* (1926); *Zone in ombra* (1926).

Miscellaneous: *Piccolo mastro spirituale* (1916); Preface to *Scritti scelti di Gian Pietro Lucini* (1917); *Dal Carso al Piave* (1918); *Davanti a Trieste* (1919); *Come ho visto il Friuli* (1919); *Avventure e ritratti primaverili* (1924); *Miguel de Unamuno* (1924).

NICOLA MOSCARDELLI

Nicola Moscardelli: born on October 9, 1894, in Aquila (Abruzzi); went to war and was wounded; is at present a journalist in Rome; was a young member of the group of *La Voce.*

Works: Novels: *L'ultima soglia* (1920); *I nostri giorni* (1923); *Vita vivente* (1924); *Il pane quotidiano* (1928).

Short stories: *Il vino della vita* (1924); *La città dei suicidi* (1927); *Roma del mio cuore.*

Poetry: *La veglia* (1913); *Abbeveratoio* (1915); *Tatuaggi* (1916); *Gioielleria notturna* (1918); *La mendica muta* (1919); *L'ora della rugiada* (1924).

Miscellaneous: *Giovanni Papini* (1923); *Le grazie della terra* (1927).

AUGUSTO GARSÌA

Augusto Garsìa: born at Forlì in 1889; a professor; lives at Lucca.

Works: Novels: *Le strade cieche* (1922); *Il dono* (1925).

Poetry: *Voci di là dal Fiume* (1923); *Voci del mio silenzio* (1927).

Criticism: *Il Magnifico e la Rinascita* (1923).

MARIA MESSINIA

Maria Messina: born at Palermo; was self-taught; now lives at Pistoia.

Works: Novels: *Primavera senza sole* (1920); *Alla deriva* (1920); *La casa nel vicolo* (1921); *Il Guinzaglio* (1921); *Un fiore che non fiori* (1923); *Le pause della vita* (1926).

Short stories: *Pettini fini ed altre novelle* (1909); *Piccoli gorghi* (1911); *Le briciole del destino* (1918).

CAROLA PROSPERI

Carola Prosperi: born in Turin; married a journalist; wrote novels and short stories and a great many books for children.

Works: Novels: *La paura di amare* (1911); *La nemica dei sogni* (1914); *L'estranea* (1915); *La casa meravigliosa* (1920); *Vergine madre* (1920); *Il fanciullo feroce* (1921); *L'amore di un'altra* (1922).

Short stories: *La profezia ed altre novelle* (1907); *Il cuore in giuoco* (1913); *Vocazioni* (1919); *Amore Amore* (1920); *Dimenticare* (1920); *Tormenti* (1921); *I lillà sono fioriti* (1922); *La felicità in gabbia* (1922).

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE NOVEL OF INTROSPECTION

G. A. BORGESE

G. A. Borgese: born on October 12, 1882, at Palermo, Sicily, where he studied until 1900; graduated in Belles Lettres at Florence in 1903; wrote from 1903–1910 for newspapers, residing at Naples, Berlin, and Turin; was given the chair of German literature at the University of Rome in 1910. He participated in the World War and in 1918 occupied the chair of German literature at the University of Milan, where he still is.

Works: Novels: *Rubè* (1921); *I vivi e i morti* (1923).

Short stories: *La città sconosciuta* (1924); *Le belle* (1927); *Il sole non è tramontato* (1929).

Poetry: *La canzone paziente* (1910); *Poesie* (1922).

Theatre: *L'arciduca* (1924); *Lazzaro* (1925).

Criticism: *Storia della critica romantica in Italia* (1905); *Gabriele D'Annunzio* (1909); *La vita e il libro* (1910–13); *Mefistofele* (1911); *Studi di letterature moderne* (1914); *Risurrezioni* (1922); *Tempo di edificare* (1923).

Works translated into English: *Rubè* (Harcourt, 1923).

SALVATOR GOTTA

Salvator Gotta: born in 1886 in Montaldo Dora (Ivrea); has cultivated both the novel and the drama; was a friend of Antonio

Fogazzaro and a pupil of Arturo Graf; graduated in Belles Lettres from the University of Turin; resides at Ivrea.

Works: Novels: The cycle of *I Vela: Pia* (1912); *Il figlio inquieto* (1917); *La più bella donna del mondo* (1919); *L'amante provinciale* (1920); *Tre mondi* (1920); *Il primo re* (1922); *La donna mia* (1924); *Lula—la bufera infernal* (1925); *Ombra, la moglie bella* (1926); *Il nome tuo* (1927); *La sagra delle vergini* (1928); *Il peccato originale* (1929).

Short stories: *Prima del sonno* (1909); *La porta del cielo* (1913); *Ragnatele* (1915); *Pronti? Forza!* (1919); *Quelle che preferisco; L'ultima ingenuità; Il diavolo in provincia* (1926).

Theatre: *Alba di nozze; La nostra ricchezza* (1921); *Lontananze* (1923); *Il manto verde* (1928); *La figlia di Santino* (1928).

Miscellaneous: *Cesareo Maria De Vecchi* (1923); *Il convegno dei martiri; Mistica patria* (1924).

MARIA DI BORIO

Maria Di Borio: born in Turin and has devoted her literary ability to fiction.

Works: Novels: *L'amica* (1906); *Una moglie* (1910); *L'intima gioia* (1912); *La fiamma che tempra* (1913); *La luce di domani* (1915); *Le fede e la vittoria* (1917); *I Bonafè* (1917); *Consolazioni* (1918); *Il nostro carattere; Le memorie di una sovrana* (1920); *E sopra il monte il Signore provvederà* (1923); *I due padroni del mondo* (1926).

Short stories: *Una madre* (1921); *Alcune donne* (1922); *Gioventù, primavera della vita*, stories for children (1924).

FAUSTO MARIA MARTINI

Fausto Maria Martini: born on April 14, 1886, in Rome; dedicated himself to journalism and to writing; gravely wounded in the World War; lives in Rome.

Works: Novels: *Verginità* (1921); *Il cuore che m'hai dato* (1925); *I volti del figlio* (1928).

Short stories: *La porta del paradiso* (1920); *La vetrina delle antichità* (1922).

Poetry: *La piccola morte* (1906); *Panem nostrum* (1908); *Le poesie provinciali* (1910); *Versi* (1917).

Theatre: *Il ritorno* (1908); *Il mattutino* (1909); *La bisca* (1910);

Il fanciullo che cadde (1915); *Aprile* (1917); *Ridi, pagliaccio* (1919); *Il giglio nero* (1920); *Il fiore sotto gli occhi* (1921); *L'altra Nanetta* (1922); *La stonatura* (1922); *Colui che uccise il sabato; Clausura; Un cortile; La sera del trenta* (1925); *La facciata* (1926); *La fuga* (1928).

Miscellaneous: *Anticlericalismo e idealismo* (1921); *Cronache drammatiche* (1922); *Cronache drammatiche* (1923); *Cronache drammatiche* (1928).

MINOR WRITERS

MICHELE SAPONARO

Michele Saponaro: born in 1885 at San Cesareo di Lecce; graduated in Belles Lettres but instead of teaching became a dramatic critic for the leading daily papers; from 1918–1920 edited the *Rivista d'Italia;* lives in Milan.

Works: Novels: *La vigilia* (1914, republished under the title of *L'idillio del figliol prodigo*); *Peccato* (1919); *Fiorella* (1920); *La casa senza sole* (1920); *Nostra madre* (1921); *L'altra sorella* (1923); *Un uomo* I. *L'adolescenza* (1925) e II. *La giovinezza* (1927); *Io e mia moglie* (1929).

Short stories: *Rosolacci* (1912); *Amore di terra lontana* (1920); *Le ninfe e i satiri* (1920); *Le mie cinque fidanzate* (1922); *Inquietudini* (1925); *Il nostro amore; Le sette stelle dell'Orsa; Guerra senza sangue; La bella risvegliata* (1928).

Theatre: *Ritorno* (1926).

Miscellaneous: *Viaggio in Norvegia* (1926).

GINO ROCCA

Gino Rocca: born at Feltre, 1892; graduated in law; dedicated himself to writing; is a novelist, playwright and journalist; took part in the World War and was decorated; lives in Milan.

Works: Novels: *L'uragano* (1919); *Un filo d'amore* (1922); *Capelli corti.*

Short stories: *Le scimmie* (1920); *Amare* (1926); *Franfillicchio* (1926).

Poetry: *Riverberi* (1920).

Drama: *Gigomard* (1908); *Trame* (1919); *La farsa dei nevrastenici* (1921); *Le liane* (1921); *Il primo amore* (1921); *El sol su i veri*

(1921); *Le pecorelle* (1925); *Gli amanti impossibili* (1925); *Mezzo gaudio* (1925); *Se no i xe mati, no li volemo* (1926); *Il nido rifatto* (1927); *L'imbriago da sesto* (1927); *Quattro donne, Il velo impigliato, Far piangere la mamma, Gli ultimi due, Il posto segnato, Il solco* in collaboration with S. Zambaldi, *Jack emigra, Le lettere dell'altro.*

Miscellaneous: *La preparazione spirituale della Germania* (1915).

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